

**H. M. Hyndman, E. B. Bax, and the
Reception of Karl Marx's Thought in
Late-Nineteenth Century Britain, c.
1881-1893**

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Abstract

This thesis examines how the idea of Socialism was remade in Britain during the 1880s. It does so with reference to the two figures most receptive to the work of Karl Marx, H. M. Hyndman and E. B. Bax. It argues that, despite the progress made in others areas of the history of British Socialism, the historiography on Hyndman and Bax is still marred by the influence of Friedrich Engels. It demonstrates that the terms 'Marxist' and 'Marxism' are anachronisms. It shows that 'Marxism' was an invented intellectual tradition. It argues therefore that it is a mistake to take its existence for granted at the outset of the period. It shows instead how Hyndman and Bax interpreted Marx over time, with and without Engels's mediation. It reveals, firstly, that Hyndman was not the Tory Radical of historical repute, and Bax, secondly, was one of the most serious internal critics of 'Marxism' of his generation, who did battle with Engels in print. The chapters on Hyndman reveal a fuller cast of characters than historians have usually been apt to acknowledge. For instance, Giuseppe Mazzini, Henry Fawcett, William Cunningham, John Morley, W. H. Mallock, and Arnold Toynbee all feature prominently. The chapters on Bax also reveal previously unacknowledged affinities: most importantly, perhaps, Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill. What also becomes apparent is the substantially different set of sources to those customarily proposed that at once both informed and facilitated the passage of modern British Socialist thought: briefly, the 'culture of altruism' that flourished among intellectuals from the 1850s to the 1880s, the rise of historical economics, the discourse of democratic Teutonism and the invention of primitive society, Comtian Positivism, and political economy in its post-Millian form.

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Introduction

‘The truth is this: during the period of England’s industrial monopoly the English working-class have, to a certain extent, shared in the benefits of the monopoly... And that is the reason why, since the dying-out of Owenism, there has been no Socialism in England.’¹ This was the view propounded by Friedrich Engels in an article written for *Commonweal*, the recently established newspaper of the Socialist League, in 1885. In 1892, Engels reproduced the content of that article, in full, in the preface to a new English edition of his youthful account of the consequences of the ‘industrial revolution’, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Overall, Engels believed that the conclusions arrived at in his journalistic assessment of ‘England in 1845 and in 1885’ still held good; he had, he insisted, at that later date, ‘but little to add.’² Yet, despite Engels’s obvious reticence, among the utterances that he did in fact join to his previous effort, in the final three paragraphs of the preface turned over to that task, he included a qualification of some considerable moment: ‘Needless to say’, he acknowledged, in an almost reluctant tone, ‘that today there is indeed “Socialism again in England”, and plenty of it – Socialism of all shades: Socialism conscious and unconscious, Socialism prosaic and poetic, Socialism of the working-class and of the middle-class, for verily, that abomination of abominations, Socialism, has not only become respectable, but has actually donned evening dress and lounges lazily on drawing-room *causeuses*.’³

¹ Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (London, Panther, 1969), p. 34.

² *Ibid*, pp. 27, 34.

³ *Ibid*.

Engels's post-hoc proviso was no overstatement. By 1892, Socialism had indeed re-entered intellectual and political life in Britain in earnest. For example, besides the presence of various groups organised with the explicit aim of realising their respective visions of Socialism – the Fabian Society, the Social Democratic Federation, and the Socialist League – some of the most notable political and literary figures of the period were also busy issuing favourable pronouncements about its positive characteristics, or even adopting, for the first time, the word Socialist as a self-designative term: with uneven degrees of enthusiasm, Joseph Chamberlain, Charles Dilke, and Oscar Wilde all fall under the first head, while Frederic Harrison can be taken as an illustration for the second.⁴ It is, to be sure, impossible to tell if Engels had him in mind for the part, but if Wilde is the ideal-typical candidate for the role of Socialism clad in evening dress, lounging lazily on drawing-room *causeuses*, then Sidney Webb and William Morris neatly fulfil the same function for Socialism in its prosaic and poetic shades. In the same manner, if Socialism of the working-class was most clearly represented in Britain by a figure like John Burns or Will Thorne (in Engels's imagination at least), then the Fabian Society epitomised its middle-class equivalent.⁵ In a telling comparison, at the same time as Burns and Thorne were assuming important leadership roles in the 'New Unionism' at the end of the 1880s, the Fabians were preoccupied instead with the notion of 'permeating' the Liberal Party, and maintained a

⁴ Joseph Chamberlain, 'Favorable Aspects of State Socialism', *The North American Review*, 152 (Jan. 1891), pp. 534-548. Charles Dilke, 'A Radical Programme. Part I', *The New Review*, 3/14 (Jul. 1890), pp. 1-14. Oscar Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', *Fortnightly Review*, 49/340 (Feb. 1891), pp. 292-319. Frederic Harrison, 'Moral and Religious Socialism', New Year's Address at Newton Hall, 1 Jan. 1891, reprinted in *National and Social Problems* (London, Macmillan & co, 1908), pp. 440-462.

⁵ Tristram Hunt, *The Frock-Coated Communist. The Life and Times of the Original Champagne Socialist* (London, Penguin, 2010), p. 334.

disdainful pose as to the suitability of the 'New Unions' to operate as a vehicle of change.⁶

By contrast, Engels showed no hesitation in affirming his support for the 'New Unionism'. Indeed, his recognition of the movement's significance constituted a second, and final, caveat to the analysis presented in his article of seven years previous. In fact, this second caveat, for Engels, was of far greater importance than the first: for neither the 'momentary fashion among bourgeois circles of affecting a mild dilution of Socialism', nor even 'the actual progress Socialism has made in England generally,' could match in terms of political magnitude 'the revival of the East End of London.'⁷ Needless to say, this was a profoundly partial interpretation. Clearly, when Engels invoked the notion of Socialism unconscious he meant the so-called 'revival of the East End'. But the idea that unconscious Socialism was operative in Britain already had a substantial and influential alternative history of its own: Henry Fawcett, John Morley, and Herbert Spencer had all argued that Socialism had acquired, unintentionally, an impetus from the State and reform-minded members of the 'educated classes'; this was also the view of the Fabians. Engels, however, was dismissive of the kind of legislative action that aroused sustained and heated controversy among other British political commentators.⁸ In general, he was scornful of organised Socialism too. The Fabians incited his disdain owing to their ethos of class-neutrality.⁹ But the revolutionary

⁶ See Asa Briggs, 'Introduction', in George Bernard Shaw (ed.), *Fabian Essays* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1962), p. 25. Sidney Webb, 'Introduction to the 1920 Reprint', in Shaw (ed.), *Fabian Essays*, p. 272.

⁷ Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, p. 34.

⁸ 'It is nothing but self-interested misrepresentation... to describe as 'socialism' all interference by the state with free competition', Engels wrote pointedly to Eduard Bernstein in March 1881. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works. Vol. 46. Marx and Engels: 1880-83* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1992), p. 74.

⁹ Engels admitted that the Fabians had 'produced... a number of good propaganda pieces... But', he added, 'the moment they come to their own brand of tactics and

Socialists provoked his contempt for their naivety, or, more serious still, the ‘doctrinaire’ assumptions that inoculated them against the ‘New Unionism’ – the very phenomenon, that is, that Engels looked upon as ‘one of the greatest and most fruitful facts of this *fin de siècle*.’¹⁰

Despite both the extreme partiality of the position adopted by Engels, and the notably tenuous credibility of many of his historico-prophetic claims, the judgements outlined above have proven remarkably influential. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the figure of Friedrich Engels casts a very long shadow indeed over the historiography of Socialism in Britain. That influence can be seen in two principal ways. In the first of these, historians have typically followed Engels in his periodisation of the shifting fortunes of Socialism. More specifically, until only relatively recently the historiography had been dominated by a number of distinguished historians who actually reproduced – in a roundabout way – his very model of interpretation. These historians identified with a method of historical research ostensibly inaugurated by Karl Marx, which diagnosed ‘social being’ as the determining factor of ‘social consciousness’: that is to say, they adhered to the so-called ‘materialist conception of history’, or ‘historical materialism’.¹¹

gloss over the class struggle, the rot sets in.’ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works. Vol. 50. Engels: 1892-1895* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 2004), p. 83. For an expression of that neutrality see George Bernard Shaw, ‘The Fabian Society: What it has done; and How it has done it’, *Fabian Tract* 41 (1892), p. 27.

¹⁰ Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, p. 35.

¹¹ For the historians in question Marx’s famous preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* functioned as a summary of his views. It is also worth noting Stefan Collini’s observation that, the preface to E. P. Thompson’s book *The Making of the English Working Class* ‘has been, according to one thought-provoking but ultimately unverifiable assertion, the most widely read preface since Marx’s 1859 preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, the classic epitome of the theory of ‘historical materialism’. *Common Reading. Critics, Historians, Publics* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 176. Thompson’s interpretation of ‘historical materialism’ was, of course, atypically

Broadly speaking, what that meant in practice was a commitment to four basic beliefs. The first belief that these historians cleaved to was a conception of the 'industrial revolution' endowed with the force of a revolutionary event – the begetter no less of the 'proletariat' as Engels had depicted it in the work cited at the beginning of this introduction.¹² The second belief shared in common by these historians resided in the mutual-understanding that the period of history between the decline of Chartism and the 'revival' of Socialism necessitated an explanation as the site of a 'non-event', namely the failure of the proletariat to perform the revolutionary role assigned to it in 'Marxist' theory.¹³ Engels attempted his own reconciliation of theoretical expectation and actual history with the concept of an 'aristocracy of the working-class' – and the longevity of that single category alone confirms the extent of the influence he exercised.¹⁴ That said, the distinction maintained in the historiography between the nominally 'utopian' forms of Socialism and their 'modern' or 'scientific' Marxian successor – the third belief – provides a worthy competitor as

agent-centred. The emphasis he placed on self-activity thus distinguished his work from that of other proponents of 'the materialist conception of history'.

¹² For analysis of this enduring myth see D. C. Coleman, *Myth, History and the Industrial Revolution* (London and Rio Grande, The Hambledon Press, 1992); David Cannadine, 'The Present and the Past in the Industrial Revolution 1880-1980', *Past & Present*, 103/1 (1984), pp. 131-172; and Stefan Collini, 'The Literary Critic and the Village Labourer: 'Culture' in Twentieth Century Britain', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14 (2004), pp. 93-116.

¹³ Christopher Kent, 'Presence and Absence: History, Theory, and the Working Class', *Victorian Studies*, 29/3 (1986), pp. 437-462.

¹⁴ See Eric Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men. Studies in the History of Labour* (London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964), Ch. 15; and, most pertinently here, Royden Harrison, *Before the Socialists. Studies in Labour and Politics, 1861-1881* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), Ch. 1. Meanwhile, for a critique and a historical assessment of the notion see Alastair Reid, 'Politics and Economics in the Formation of the British Working Class: A Response to H. F. Moorhouse', *Social History*, 3/3 (1978), p. 347-361. There were, to be sure, other historians who cleaved to less obviously reductionist explanatory concepts. From the beginning of the 1960s, the Gramscian notion of hegemony enjoyed a considerable degree of popularity, for example.

evidence of sustained dominion.¹⁵ The first three of these beliefs are only tangentially related to the so-called ‘revival’ of Socialist thought in Britain during the 1880s – the subject of this thesis – but the final one impinges upon it directly: namely, the belief entertained by many of these historians that, in addition to the arrested development of the practical movement of the working-class in Britain, indigenous Socialist theory was also ‘abnormally’ weak.¹⁶

Until the 1980s, this remained the state of play in the historiography of British Socialism. During that decade, however, the project of inferring political affinity from social class was increasingly vacated. In its place, a growing number of historians began to adopt a non-referential conception of language, which eventually led to a new appreciation of the autonomy – or the primacy even – of the political as a causal category.¹⁷ Moreover, by the 1990s this new approach had borne considerable scholarly fruit. Yet, if the main beliefs informing the work of the deeply authoritative historians of the previous generation had been successfully extirpated, a number of minor factual prejudices remained, continuing to outlive the historiographical tradition that once sustained them. And here, too, the shadow of Engels is discernible.

The second way in which Engels can be seen to exercise influence in the historiography of British Socialism derives from the various contemporaneous assessments he made of the revival’s foremost personalities and groups. In this instance as well, the same group of

¹⁵ See Gregory Claeys, ‘Non-Marxian socialism 1815-1914’, in Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 524-529.

¹⁶ Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men*, p. 235.

¹⁷ See Gareth Stedman Jones’s ‘Introduction’ to *Languages of Class. Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-24.

historians responsible for advancing Engels's historiographical assumptions and claims were also culpable of reproducing his distorted evaluation of British Socialism, in both its practical and theoretical forms. If the exponents of non-Marxian Socialism in Britain were thus promptly discharged as 'uninteresting' and 'quite unimportant', the Socialists most sympathetic to Marx were likewise condemned as 'numerically and intellectually negligible'.¹⁸ This at least was the view of a number of exceptionally combative young historians writing for the *New Left Review* during the 1960s.¹⁹ Other historians, however, associated with a somewhat different tradition of 'Marxist historiography' (and politics) were considerably more cautious and less categorical in their disregard of British Socialist intellectuals.²⁰ Yet Morris was the only Socialist presumed to identify with the tradition purportedly bequeathed by Marx to receive complete exoneration from the charge of intellectual bankruptcy.²¹ Moreover, what was given with one hand was instantly taken away with the other. That is to say, the very historians responsible for the exoneration of

¹⁸ Tom Nairn, 'The Nature of the Labour Party (Part 1)', *New Left Review*, 1/27 (1964), p. 44. Eric Hobsbawm, *How to Change the World. Marx and Marxism 1840-2011* (London, Little Brown, 2011), p. 224.

¹⁹ Principally Anderson and Nairn, who gave their names to the so-called 'Anderson-Nairn thesis' in the following articles: 'Origins of the Present Crisis', *New Left Review*, 1/23 (1964), pp. 26-53; and 'Components of the National Culture', *New Left Review*, 1/50 (1968), pp. 3-57 by the former; and 'The British Political Elite', *New Left Review*, 1/23 (1964), pp. 18-25; 'The English Working Class', *New Left Review*, 1/24 (1964), pp. 43-57; and the aforementioned, 'Nature of the Labour Party' and its companion essay, 'The Nature of the Labour Party (Part Two)', *New Left Review*, 1/28 (1964), pp. 33-62 by the latter.

²⁰ I deploy the term 'intellectual' in the knowledge that it is still fundamentally anachronistic to do so for the period in British history under discussion. The meaning conferred to it here is the relatively neutral one, suggesting only an individual preoccupied with ideas independent from a professional *raison d'être*. See, above all, Stefan Collini, *Absent Minds. Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007); and Peter Allen, 'The Meanings of 'An Intellectual': Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century English Usage', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 55/4 (1986), pp. 342-358.

²¹ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Bernard Shaw's Socialism', *Science & Society*, 11/4 (1947), p. 324. E. P. Thompson, *William Morris. Romantic to Revolutionary* (London, Merlin Press, 1977).

Morris were guilty of entrenching, at the same time, Engels's judgements of the other Socialists receptive to Marx even further.²²

Undoubtedly, part of the reason for this was political. Indeed, to revisit this section of the historiography, which roughly traversed the period between the formation of the Communist Party Historians Group in 1946 and the cessation of Perry Anderson's editorship of the *New Left Review* at the beginning of the 1980s, is to re-enter quite unfamiliar historical terrain, closer in its political preoccupations to the theoretical output of the subjects of this study than to the hermeneutic priorities of most present-day professional historians.²³ It is no exaggeration in fact to suggest that they belong to the same continuous history: namely, the history of the career of 'Marxism' in Britain. The anachronistic set of pre-judgements that these historians extraneously carried into their historical scholarship about what it meant to be a 'Marxist' precluded, in short, a properly dispassionate appraisal.

With the exception of Morris, the reputations of those present at the foundation of 'Marxism' during the 1880s have not fared well. Indeed, the reputations of the two most important figures involved in the reception of Marx's ideas, Henry Mayers Hyndman and Ernest Belfort Bax, have fared notably badly. If the former was never permitted to recover from the

²² While Hobsbawm, for instance, granted in one breath the 'really interesting and original contributions to Marxist theory in these islands' from Morris and James Connolly, in the next he imperiously dismissed Bax as a 'cranky' author of 'pioneer Marxist histories'. *Labouring Men*, p. 234. Thompson, similarly, dealt summarily with Bax, spurning his 'sudden fits of utter abstraction', his 'completely impractical cast of mind', and his 'essential lack of proportion'. 'His best work was done', he concluded, 'when Morris was at his elbow to bring him down to earth with a bang out of his naive ruminations.' *William Morris*, p. 373.

²³ See Dennis L. Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain. History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1997), which incorporates the history of the Communist Party Historians Group. For more compressed histories of the British New Left see Lin Chun, *The British New Left* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1993); and Michael Kenny, *The First New Left. British Intellectuals after Stalin* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1995).

unyielding attitude of antipathy shown towards him by Engels, the latter was sentenced to obscurity for his apparently heterodox views. In any case, their basic unreliability was confirmed by the support shown by both men for the British State during the First World War, and – even more unforgivably perhaps – by their shared opposition to the ‘Bolshevist regime in Russia’.²⁴ Between them, they had created, in short, an intellectual and political space not only on the wrong side of Engels, but on the wrong side of Vladimir Lenin too, the other ‘official’ heir to the Marxian heritage.²⁵ Needless to say, in the context of the politically supercharged historical scholarship of the Cold War era, this was an exceptionally unfortunate position to occupy. It was a handicap from which neither Hyndman nor Bax ever really recovered. For, when the purchase of ‘historical materialism’ and its attendant categories finally began to deteriorate in the 1980s, the interest in ‘Marxism’ and its own internal history deteriorated with it. As other historians stepped into the breach to champion some of the long-ignored personalities and thinkers associated with Socialism during the 1880s, that relationship of neglect was not expunged. It was simply inverted. Hence the familiar, politically determined, characterisations of Hyndman and Bax passed down from Engels were imported, unaltered, to provide ambience for a series of much more unfamiliar vignettes.

One step forward two steps back may not be the most apt description of this historiographical breakthrough; but the statement two

²⁴ Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘Two Bolshevist Intellectuals’, *Justice*, (Aug. 26, 1920), p. 7. Hyndman articulated his dislike of Bolshevism succinctly in *The Evolution of Revolution* (London, Twentieth Century Press, 1921), Ch. 33. For Bax and Hyndman’s shared opposition to ‘Prussian militarist ambition’, meanwhile, during the First World War see the article they penned together, ‘Socialism, Materialism and the War’, *The English Review* (Dec. 1914), pp. 52-69.

²⁵ In a review essay in 1911, Lenin described Hyndman’s autobiography as ‘the life story of a British bourgeois philistine who, being the pick of his class, finally makes his way to socialism, but never completely throws off bourgeois traditions, bourgeois views and prejudices.’ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works. Vol. 17* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1963), p. 309.

steps forward one step back may well contain more than just a sizable grain of truth in it. For if the lopsidedness of the historiography had only been reversed, rather than set fully aright, what had been achieved was a partial recovery of the exceptionally rich array of non-Marxian Socialist ideas generated during the 1880s.²⁶ Taken together, the so-called linguistic turn in social history and the renewed interest in some of the forgotten voices of fin de siècle Socialism illuminated new ways in which the ‘revival’ of Socialism in Britain might be re-narrated. Whatever that entailed precisely remained to be resolved. But one thing at least seemed reasonably certain: the portrait of British Socialism that Engels had sketched, or completed rather, in 1892 was ineradicably flawed. Modern historians, in consequence, would have to return to the drawing board anew.

It is fair to say that by the 1990s the major conceptual fallacies engendered by Engels had been largely expunged from the historiography of British Socialism. As we have seen, however, that did not prevent the phenomenon of certain more minor prejudices persisting. This was most obviously the case, and by and large remains so, as far as the Social Democratic Federation and its leading intellectuals were concerned. Yet, those rather careless, secondary distortions were by no means the only fossils left over. Other, considerably more important, relics, too, retained a place in the historiography. And, even now, they continue to impair how the history of Socialism during the 1880s is understood.

The first of these deposits is essentially linguistic. It is also more equivocal than the second, insofar as its impression is injurious. Shorn of its

²⁶ Ruth Livesey's, *Socialism, Sex, and the Culture of Aestheticism in Britain, 1880-1914* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), in particular, takes this section of the historiography to a new level of sophistication.

previous, pronounced theoretical load, the development of organised Socialism during the final two decades of the nineteenth century is still customarily described as a ‘revival’.²⁷ As we have already seen, the concept of a ‘revival’ was first given currency by Engels. In the opening quotation of this introduction, Engels suggested that ‘since the dying out of Owenism’ Socialism had been conspicuously absent in Britain; and it had not returned, he added, until the 1880s. Taking these utterances to have a strictly numerical meaning, Engels, to be sure, may well have had a point. It is certainly true that the Christian Socialists around Frederick Denison Maurice, John Ludlow, and Charles Kingsley numbered very few; the Guild of St. Matthew, founded by Stewart Headlam in 1877, was similarly modest in size; and John Stuart Mill’s self-description as a Socialist in his *Autobiography* was also a singular affair, showing few signs of simulation.²⁸ Clearly, then, given the breadth of support that Socialism enjoyed during the 1830s, by contrast, and again in the 1880s, there is nothing intrinsically wrong in using the term ‘revival’.²⁹ If, however, that is what is implied by most modern historians, Engels, on the other hand, had a quite different association in mind from this, somewhat insipid, numerical connection.

²⁷ See, for example, Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics. British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 124; Ruth Kinna, *William Morris. The Art of Socialism* (Cardiff, Cardiff University Press, 2000), p. 88; and Jon Lawrence, ‘Popular Radicalism and the Socialist Revival in Britain’, *Journal of British Studies*, 31/2 (1992), pp. 163-186, three texts singularly free from any of the assumptions historically attendant upon its usage.

²⁸ For the history of Christian Socialism see Edward R. Norman, *The Victorian Christian Socialists* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Peter d’A Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival, 1877-1914. Religion, Class, and Social Conscience in Late-Victorian England* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1968). John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (London, Penguin, 1989), p. 175. The historiography on Mill’s relationship to Socialism is expounded in fn. 188.

²⁹ For the numerical support Owenism enjoyed in Britain in the 1830s see J. F. C. Harrison, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America. The Quest for the New Moral World* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 195-232.

That Engels appealed to Owenism at all in this context was actually something of an anomaly. For Owenism performed much the same role in his assessment of Socialism in Britain during the 1830s and forties, as organised Socialism and its so-called bourgeois hangers-on did in the 1880s. That is to say, each was considered comparatively trivial. In the same way as organised Socialism counted for little next to the rise of the 'New Unionism', Owenism was an episode of merely incidental proportions when juxtaposed to Chartism. According to Engels, Socialism was not an 'accidental discovery by this or that intellect of genius', much less still, of some other more diminutive order of mind; Socialism, rather, was the 'necessary outcome of the struggle between two classes produced by history – the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.'³⁰ More precisely, 'Modern Socialism' was 'nothing but the reflex in thought' of the 'conflict between productive forces and mode of production', 'its ideal reflection in the minds of above all the class directly suffering under it, the working class.'³¹ Thus, if the Socialism embodied in both Chartism and the 'New Unionism' was of a characteristically unconscious stripe, it was no less real for its lack of articulate expression. On the contrary, these movements, as class movements, were symptomatic of 'true proletarian Socialism'.³²

This, then, in essence, was what Engels meant when he spoke of a revival of Socialism. It goes without saying that this will no longer do. On a simple historical level, Engels's declaration of identity between the movements cited above and Socialism is erroneous. It is now widely agreed, for example, that Chartism was not a premonition of Socialism, but the expression rather of 'a radical critique of society, which had enjoyed an

³⁰ Frederick Engels, *Socialism. Utopian and Scientific* (London, Bookmarks, 1993), p. 84.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

³² Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, p. 263.

almost continuous existence since the 1760s and 1770s.’³³ Similarly, the ‘New Unionism’ was far less promising political terrain than Engels had suggested: the Dockers accepted leaders like John Burns and Tom Mann, ‘not because of their socialism but in spite of it.’³⁴ Moreover, substituting Owenism for Chartism (reverting, that is, to a numerical connection) does little to resolve the problem. Robert Owen and his followers may have called themselves Socialists, but if that is where the kinship begins it ends sharply there too.³⁵ However much they owed to the Owenites themselves, the influence exercised by Mill and the Christian Socialists was of far greater consequence for the following generation than the ideas and example provided by the community-builders that preceded them.³⁶ Engels marginalized these mid-century Socialists for a reason. Simply stated, they did not cohere with his own exacting, if also notably vague, definition of Socialism. However, in the absence of the deeply felt political imperatives that once governed much of the scholarship, it clearly no longer makes sense to follow his lead in making the same omission.

The fact that it never did make sense to cleave to such a stipulative definition provides one of the keynotes to Mark Bevir’s recent history of Socialism in late-nineteenth century Britain. He also provides there the first real attempt to displace the timeworn terminology of a Socialist ‘revival’. It is, of course, a somewhat lamentable situation when it still must be

³³ Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, p. 168.

³⁴ Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London. A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian London* (London and New York, Verso, 2013), p. 348.

³⁵ Arthur E. Bestor, ‘The Evolution of the Socialist Vocabulary’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 9/3 (1948), pp. 259-302. For the intellectual history of Owenism see Gregory Claeys, *Citizens and Saints. Politics and Anti-Politics in Early British Socialism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989).

³⁶ Sidney Pollard, ‘Nineteenth-Century Co-operation: From Community Building to Shopkeeping’, in Asa Briggs and John Saville (eds.), *Essays in Labour History* (London, Macmillan, 1967), pp. 74-112.

forcefully insisted upon that ‘Socialism has no necessary core.’³⁷ Nonetheless, that task is performed by Bevir dexterously. Socialism, he quite rightly averred, is not a determinate idea, but ‘a fluid set of beliefs and practices that people are constantly making and remaking’.³⁸ It is only unfortunate that Bevir opted to afford priority to the former description instead of the latter. For in deliberately adopting the Thompsonian locution of ‘making’ in place of the teleological or simply assumption-laden ‘revival’, the 1880s and 1890s thus becomes the period in which Socialism was *made*. However, while it is certainly true that a plurality of new Socialisms were indeed made in the timeframe established by Bevir, it remains the case that remaking is still the more apposite term. For, if the first unintentionally elides the imprint of earlier Socialisms, the second accounts for the continuities between the Owenite and various mid-century species of Socialism and their late-nineteenth century heirs.

That Bevir’s re-description was not altogether successful is one thing, but that he exaggerated the novelty of his underlying approach is quite another. In *The Making of British Socialism* Bevir presented a bifurcated portrait of a ‘new’ historiography (sensitive to ‘language and ideas’) and an ‘old’ historiography (‘determinist and essentialist’ in character).³⁹ In so doing, he enforced an exceptionally clumsy abridgement. To suggest that to ‘narrate the history of Socialism in terms of a diverse cluster of ideas and the traditions and dilemmas from which they emerged’ was a distinctly new proposition was plainly a spurious claim, even if it was not a wholly disingenuous one.⁴⁰ Other historians, long preceding Bevir’s numerous efforts, had also declined to emulate the specific emphases

³⁷ Mark Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2011), p. 13.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 10.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

embodied in 'Marxist' accounts, favouring instead more rigorously contextualist standpoints. For example, Stanley Pierson and Willard Wolfe both contributed nuanced analyses of late-nineteenth century British Socialism during the 1970s.⁴¹ Like Bevir, they too eschewed essentialist definitions of Socialism, downgraded the importance of the economic as a causal category, and stressed the considerable continuities in its remaking.⁴² That Bevir's dichotomy between the 'old' and the 'new' did not account for these valuable parallel histories was no mere sleight of hand, however, designed to accentuate his own achievements. It stemmed, rather, from the specific method of historical enquiry he recommended and deployed there – in particular, his use of 'aggregate concepts'.⁴³

Clearly, Bevir's presentation of a dualistic historiography suppressed the complexity that actually inhered in the scholarship. The use of the aggregate concepts the 'old' and the 'new' served more to obscure the historical record than they did to illuminate it. Nor, unfortunately, was this an isolated occurrence. There are further examples in which Bevir's use of aggregate concepts does far more to shroud and confuse our understanding of the past than it does to elucidate it. Indeed, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the suppression of complexity is simply a precondition of their use. It is, therefore, also hard not to conclude that it is a price scarcely worth paying for the ostensible greater narrative clarity and sense of

⁴¹ Stanley Pierson, *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism. The Struggle for a New Consciousness* (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1973). Willard Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism. Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines, 1881-1889* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1975).

⁴² That said, Stefan Collini's complaint that Wolfe's book lacked awareness of legitimating arguments and rhetorical devices was apt. 'Liberalism and the Legacy of Mill', *The Historical Journal*, 20/1 (1977), p. 253. The same criticism, furthermore, can be levelled at Pierson's account.

⁴³ Bevir, *Making of British Socialism*, p. 9. For a fuller account of Bevir's methodology see *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999).

historical perspective that Bevir maintained they induce.⁴⁴ Simply put, accuracy should, as far as possible, always override ease of explanation. This, of course, is by no means tantamount to calling for an extreme methodological nominalism. On the contrary, aggregate concepts no doubt have their place. It is, rather, simply to insist upon a somewhat more circumspect procedure of discrimination than that affected by Bevir in the series of analytical incisions with which he dissected the history of late-nineteenth century British Socialism. For, in the critical judgements that he brought to pass in his book, the suppression of complexity is unmistakably apparent.

Nowhere is that imprudence more obvious than in Bevir's use of the term 'Marxist'. Bevir deployed it to demarcate one group of late-nineteenth century British Socialists from the other groups extant at the time. In itself, that was not of course an innovative move. The same division is ubiquitous in the secondary literature. Yet, notwithstanding its omnipresence, it is a profoundly anachronistic description. In Britain, the Socialists most receptive to Marx's ideas did not describe themselves as 'Marxists', but self-identified rather as Social Democrats. Moreover, the cognate term 'Marxism', also used freely in this context by Bevir and other historians, is no less problematic. It, too, as we shall see, is equally poised to mislead.

⁴⁴ Bevir, of course, recognised the 'tension'. 'On the one hand,' he wrote, 'aggregate concepts necessarily clump particular beliefs and events together; they suggest a pattern, privileging some features and some cases while neglecting others; and so they might seem inevitably to elide diversity and contingency. On the other hand, the more historians refuse all aggregate concepts and focus instead on the diversity and contingency of particular cases and topics, the less able they are to explain what happened in the past.' *Making of British Socialism*, pp. 9-10. In contrast to the methodological procedure proposed by Bevir this thesis takes its cue concerning method, above all, from the work of Quentin Skinner. That is to say, it stresses the performativity of the texts treated herein. The aspiration, as Skinner put it, is not 'the impossible task of getting inside the heads of long-dead thinkers; it is simply to use the ordinary techniques of historical enquiry to grasp their concepts, to follow their distinctions, to recover their beliefs and, so far as possible, to see things their way.' *Visions of Politics. Volume One. Regarding Method* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. vii.

Hence, in this respect, Bevir muddied the water further still, in this already notably stagnant recess of the historiography. For, if his use of the term 'Marxist' was not unusual, the potential consequences of his decision to use it were certainly more pernicious, insofar as his rationalisation of the use of aggregate concepts provided the term with a certain philosophical undergirding, which it ordinarily lacked. Thus, with Bevir's backing, these categories continue to undermine a historically accurate apprehension of the Socialist ideas circulating in Britain during the 1880s. Taken together, they constitute the second, and much more unequivocally harmful, deposit in the historiography of British Socialism invoked above.

Once again, the figure of Engels looms large here: if it is not entirely accurate, in a strictly formal sense, to describe him as 'the first Marxist', it is certainly true to say 'that he in some way invented Marxism'.⁴⁵ In their present usage, neither one of these terms gained currency until the latter part of the 1880s.⁴⁶ They were first used in a conscious and systematic way not by Engels, but by one of his foremost disciples, Karl Kautsky, from 1882 onwards.⁴⁷ Engels, by contrast, first speaks publicly of 'the Marxist world outlook', as opposed to just 'scientific Socialism', the label he typically deployed to describe the body of ideas apparently expounded by Marx, in 1888. Furthermore, it does not become a habit.⁴⁸ The British adherents of Social Democracy harboured similar linguistic preferences. They, too,

⁴⁵ Terrell Carver, 'Marxism as Method', in Terence Ball and James Farr (eds.), *After Marx* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 261.

⁴⁶ The two terms were deployed initially polemically, used by Marx's opponents in a pejorative way. See Georges Haupt, 'Marx and Marxism', in Eric Hobsbawm (ed.), *The History of Marxism. Vol. 1, Marxism in Marx's Day* (Brighton, Harvester Press, 1982), pp. 266-270.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

⁴⁸ Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1976), p. 2.

generally opted for the term ‘scientific Socialism’ as a way to demarcate and describe their ideas.⁴⁹ Of course, for many late-nineteenth century European Socialists, these terms were mere synonyms, and could be readily exchanged for one another with no discernible change in meaning. For others, though, the term ‘scientific Socialism’ did not necessarily cohere exactly with the system elaborated by Engels during the 1880s. To categorise, therefore, these Socialists as ‘Marxists’ is not only to put the cart before the horse chronologically, it is also – in some cases, at least – ideationally misleading too.

The words ‘Marxist’ and ‘Marxism’ were established properly in the European Socialist movement only after Engels’s death in 1895. They became entrenched during the so-called ‘revisionist crisis’.⁵⁰ But the body of ideas denoted by the latter term had been set by Engels himself during the period following the publication of *Anti-Dühring* in 1878. As Gareth Stedman Jones observed, the book constituted ‘in many ways the founding moment of *Marxism*.’⁵¹ There were, however, other ancillary moments of importance during the early stages of the career of that invented intellectual tradition. The publication of Engels’s *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, for instance, in 1884, and his *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, published in book-form four years later, also represented significant landmarks. Pride of place, though, among those further instalments goes to the graveside speech delivered by Engels at Marx’s funeral on 14 March 1883. Together with *Anti-Dühring*,

⁴⁹ The prefix ‘scientific’ was used interchangeably with modern. Morris, meanwhile, elected to self-describe as a ‘Communist’. See Kinna, *William Morris*, pp. 114–121.

⁵⁰ Haupt, ‘Marx and Marxism’, p. 282.

⁵¹ Gareth Stedman Jones, ‘Marx’s *Critique of Political Economy*: A Theory of History or a Theory of Communism?’, in Chris Wickham (ed.), *Marxist History-Writing for the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 141.

the transcript of that oration served to codify the interpretive framework from which Marx's own ideas would thereafter be understood.⁵²

In contrast to forty years ago, it is now quite widely accepted that Marx's ideas were adjusted or altered in the years between 1883 and 1895 under Engels's stewardship.⁵³ This occurred in four crucial ways. To take the first three together, the conceptual triad of 'scientific Socialism', 'historical materialism' and the 'materialist dialectic' were not of Marx's design. Instead, these conceptual categories were created and given currency by Engels. Without doubt, all three of these adjustments were false. Yet if Engels was responsible for the labels of these categories, he was nevertheless applying a 'gloss', as Terrell Carver put it, to ideas contained, in potential at least, in Marx's own work.⁵⁴ The same cannot be said, however, of his fourth adjustment, which was much more straightforwardly fictitious, namely Marx's alleged sympathy with Charles Darwin's ideas on evolution, and the putative parallel between their respective intellectual endeavours.

The relevance of this four-fold discrepancy for the remaking of British Socialism during the 1880s resides in the fact that this is how Marx's ideas were gradually re-packaged and presented over the course of that decade. That is to say, British Socialists *learnt* to see Marx as the author of a

⁵² Terence Ball, 'Marx and Darwin: A Reconsideration', *Political Theory*, 7/4 (1979), p. 470. This point requires stressing, because even when historians have recognised the dynamic nature of the British Socialist's intellectual transactions with Marx and Engels they have still taken for granted the pre-existence of a ready-made 'Marxist' theory. Thus, 'Marxist ideas were either 'filtered through' various indigenous currents of thought, or, put slightly differently, 'Marxism' functioned 'as a palimpsest' on which they were simply inscribed. See Pierson, *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism*, p. xi; and Raphael Samuel, 'British Marxist Historians (Part One)', *New Left Review*, 1/120 (1980), p. 24, respectively.

⁵³ See Paul Thomas, *Marxism and Scientific Socialism. From Engels to Althusser* (New York, Routledge, 2008); and Gareth Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx. Greatness and Illusion* (London, Allen Lane, 2016), in particular.

⁵⁴ Terrell Carver, *Engels. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 76.

scientific, law-based model of historical development, with its own specific method of inquiry. Certainly, at the beginning of the 1880s Marx's ideas had not been seen in those terms by Hyndman and Bax, the Socialists chiefly responsible for putting his name on the map among Radicals in Britain. Nor, initially, were Marx and Engels seen to inhabit a joint-identity. That connection was likewise created by Engels as he succeeded in recasting Marx's ideas in his own positivist mould. The third person singular began to give way to the first person plural in Engels's discussions of his former mentor's work around 1885, thus commencing the myth of a long-standing working partnership between the two men concerning matters of theory.⁵⁵ The British Socialists attracted to Marx also learnt, consequently, to see it that way.

The precise subject of this thesis is how the idea of Socialism was remade in Britain by the figures most receptive to Marx's work during the 1880s. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 focus on Hyndman's conversion to Socialism between 1880 and 1881. They situate him against a backdrop of discussion of Socialism in the periodical press and the preoccupations of other contemporary Radicals. They chart how Hyndman initially viewed Marx's ideas, unmediated by Engels, and how he combined them with other sources. The same task is performed for Bax in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 returns to Hyndman's interaction with Marx's thought in 1883, with Engels now exercising considerable influence in how he did so. Chapter 6 documents how Hyndman engaged with domestic political arguments. Chapters 7, 8, 9,

⁵⁵ Paul Thomas, 'Engels and "Scientific Socialism"', in Manfred B. Steger and Terrell Carver (eds.), *Engels after Marx* (Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), pp. 220, 227. For a more thorough analysis see Terrell Carver, *Marx and Engels. The Intellectual Relationship* (Brighton, Wheatsheaf, 1983).

10 and 11 then pick up on Bax's mature engagement with Marx under Engels's tutelage. In combination, they elaborate the context from which Bax issued his theoretical contributions from 1884 to 1892, and illumine how he variously echoed and sought to combat a number of extant intellectual currents.

If the chapters on Hyndman reveal a fuller cast of characters than historians have usually been apt to acknowledge – Henry Fawcett, William Cunningham, John Morley, W. H. Mallock, and Arnold Toynbee to name only a few – then the chapters on Bax also reveal previously unacknowledged affinities: most importantly, perhaps, Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill. They divulge, additionally, a serious critique of Engels. So far from being 'abnormally' weak, what emerges is that Bax's Socialist theory wrestled with many of the problems identified by mid- to late-twentieth century critics of Marxism working broadly within the same tradition. Some of those parallels are taken up in the conclusion. But what also becomes apparent is the substantially different set of sources to those customarily proposed that at once both informed and facilitated the passage of modern British Socialist thought: briefly, the 'culture of altruism' that flourished among intellectuals from the 1850s to the 1880s, the rise of historical economics, the discourse of democratic Teutonism and the invention of primitive society, Comtian Positivism, and political economy in its post-Millian form.

What is not considered in the following pages is the participation in the remaking of Socialism of either Edward Aveling or William Morris. Both, to be sure, merit discussion in a study of this nature: Aveling, if only for helping to perpetuate the Marx-Darwin myth, Morris for more

substantive reasons.⁵⁶ But on grounds of limited space these Socialists also responsive to Marx have been omitted. Unlike Hyndman and Bax, Aveling's contribution to Socialist literature was slim and unremarkable. He is, therefore, easily disregarded as a candidate for inclusion.⁵⁷ Morris's work, on the other hand, was neither of those things. But, as other scholars have recognised, his reception of Marx's thought owed a great deal to Bax, and he is already relatively well served by the historiography.⁵⁸ Besides, a line has to be drawn somewhere, and there are reasons, equally as robust, to extend the remit of discussion to others like George Bernard Shaw who initially fought Marx's corner in the debate over value theory with Philip Wicksteed in 1884, and Edward Carpenter who also drew on Engels's work and continued to hold Marx in high esteem while Shaw, conversely, performed an about-face on the import of the so-called 'Jevonian Criticism'.⁵⁹

The same kind of pragmatism, finally, informs the chronological parameters of the thesis too. Loosely, it takes 1892 as an endpoint. It does so, however, not because the Independent Labour Party was formed the following year, changing the organisational landscape of British Socialism; nor because the Fabian Society, whose members Engels described as

⁵⁶ See Ball, 'Marx and Darwin', pp. 474-477.

⁵⁷ See William Greenslade, 'Revisiting Edward Aveling', in John Stokes (ed.), *Eleanor Marx (1855-1898). Life. Work. Contacts* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000), pp. 41-52; Chushichi Tsuzuki, *The Life of Eleanor Marx. A Socialist Tragedy* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1967); and David Stack, 'The First Darwinian Left: Radical and Socialist Responses to Darwin, 1859-1914', *History of Political Thought*, 21/4 (2000), pp. 697-701.

⁵⁸ Roger Aldous, 'Compulsory Baxination': Morris and the Misogynist', *The Journal of the William Morris Society*, 12/1 (1996), pp. 35-40. Anna Vaninskaya, *William Morris and the Idea of Community. Romance, History, and Propaganda, 1880-1914* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 79-87. Besides Vaninskaya's sterling book, Kinna's *William Morris* provides the best account of his political thought to date.

⁵⁹ For Shaw see Mark Bevir, 'The Marxism of George Bernard Shaw', *History of Political Thought*, 13/2 (1992), pp. 299-318; and 'The Jevonian Criticism of Marx', *To-day*, 3/13 (Jan. 1885), pp. 22-27. For Carpenter see Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter. A Life of Liberty and Love* (London and New York, Verso, 2008); *Civilisation. Its Cause and Cure and Other Essays* (New York, George Allen & Unwin, 1889), pp. 1-50; and 'The Value of the Value-Theory', *To-day*, 67/11 (Jun. 1889), pp. 179-182.

‘wolves in sheep’s clothing’ and ‘the worst enemies of the workers’, hit ‘its peak of early influence’ that year.⁶⁰ It is, rather, the publication of Bax’s book, *The Problem of Reality*, that determines its outer boundary. For it is in that text that he challenged the Engelsian rendering of Marx most clearly, enunciating an alternative to the positivism, the uncompromisingly one-sided ‘materialist doctrine of history’, and the theory of economic collapse that formed the bedrock of ‘Marxism’. The thesis elides, in consequence, Bax’s role in the Revisionist Debate, as well as his noteworthy views on imperialism and patriotism (both of which were sharpened during the Second Boer War).⁶¹ Moreover, the chapters on Hyndman are even more circumscribed: they fail to broach his Municipal Socialist proposals, his critique of Marginalism, and his activities in opposition to the Russian Bolshevik regime.⁶² The intention, however, is that what the thesis forgoes in range it compensates for in detail.

⁶⁰ Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, p. 26. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men*, p. 250.

⁶¹ See Henry Tudor and J. M. Tudor (eds.), *Marxism and Social Democracy. The Revisionist Debate, 1896-1898* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988). Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics*, pp. 159-168. Anna Vaninskaya, ‘My mother, drunk or sober’: G. K. Chesterton and patriotic anti-imperialism’, *History of European Ideas*, 34/4 (2008), 535-547.

⁶² H. M. Hyndman, *A Commune for London* (London, Justice Printery, 1887). H. M. Hyndman, *The Economics of Socialism. Being a Series of Seven Lectures on Political Economy* (London, Twentieth Century Press, 1896), Ch. 7. Markku Ruotsila, ‘Hyndman and the Russian Question after 1917’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 46/4 (2011), pp. 767-787.

A Certain Hyndman

On 15 December 1881 Marx wrote to his friend Friedrich Adolph Sorge. ‘The English’, he informed him, ‘have recently begun to occupy themselves more with *Capital*, etc.’⁶³ Marx’s sense that a new swell of interest in his ideas had begun had been spurred by the publication of three texts, a small book published in June, and two articles published shortly after in October and December in the periodical press. He began by describing to Sorge an article written by John Rae, a soon-to-be historian of contemporary Socialism, published in the *Contemporary Review*: ‘Very inadequate, full of mistakes, but “fair”’, he added scornfully.⁶⁴ ‘The fairness of making yourself at least sufficiently acquainted with the subject of your criticism seems a thing quite unknown to the penmen of British philistinism’, he protested.⁶⁵

Moving quickly on, Marx drew his friend’s attention next to ‘a little book’ which had been ‘published by a certain Hyndman (who had before intruded himself into my house)’, namely *England for All*.⁶⁶ Needless to say, ‘a certain Hyndman’ who had ‘intruded himself into my house’ signalled a degree of displeasure here too. The main source of contention in this instance, however, was less an inadequacy of treatment, but rather – notoriously – what Marx felt was an inadequacy of acknowledgement. ‘The chapters on Labour and Capital are only literal extracts from, or circumlocutions of, the *Capital*’, he complained, ‘but the fellow does neither

⁶³ Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 46, p. 162.

⁶⁴ Ibid. John Rae, ‘The Socialism of Karl Marx and the Young Hegelians’, *The Contemporary Review*, 40 (Jul. 1881), pp. 585-607.

⁶⁵ Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 46, p. 162.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

quote the book, nor its author'.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Marx conceded that in 'so far as it pilfers the *Capital*' Hyndman's book made 'good propaganda', even if its author was both a plagiarist and 'a "weak" vessel' to boot – 'very far from having even the patience... of studying a matter thoroughly'.⁶⁸

Clearly, the publication of the first of these texts were disappointing events for Marx. The publication of the third, however, was, as he saw it, a much more encouraging affair. In the December edition of *Modern Thought*, Ernest Belfort Bax contributed an article elucidating Marx's ideas in its series entitled 'Leaders of Modern Thought'. 'Now this', Marx wrote in his letter to Sorge, completing his assessment of the recent surge of attention, 'is the first publication of the kind which is pervaded by a real enthusiasm for the new ideas themselves and boldly stands up against Brit. Philistinism'.⁶⁹ It, too, was not without its own serious faults, he explained.⁷⁰ Indeed, much was also 'wrong and confused' there.⁷¹ But Marx gave it his imprimatur nonetheless, instructing Eleanor Marx to send Bax a letter of thanks and appreciation.⁷²

As it turned out, Bax and Marx would never meet. But the praise that Marx conferred upon his article did eventually lead to an invitation from Engels, asking Bax to visit him shortly after Marx's death in 1883. That visit began, in turn, 'an acquaintance and friendship' that lasted until Engels's own death in 1895.⁷³ And, apart from Edward Aveling, the husband of Eleanor Marx, a noted activist in her own right, Bax was in fact the only

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 163.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ernest Belfort Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions of a Mid and Late Victorian* (London, G. Allen & Unwin, 1918), p. 45.

⁷³ Ibid.

prominent British Socialist to frequent Engels's house during the 1880s and nineties.⁷⁴

Hyndman, of course, was assuredly not a welcome guest in Engels's home. Quite the opposite; following the incident adverted to above – namely, the allegation of plagiarism – Hyndman found himself permanently excluded from Engels's house, and his reputation seriously sullied among many Continental Socialists as a result. He had, however, as the above quotation obliquely suggests, once been a welcome visitor at the Marx family home. Indeed, between the end of 1880 and the publication of *England for All* Hyndman could be found there relatively regularly. Besides his enthusiasm for *Capital*, which he had read just months prior to their first meeting, and which first earned him an audience with the little known German Doctor, their shared aversion to Russia on the so-called Eastern Question 'constituted a link' between them, and Marx was also already familiar with, and sympathetic to, Hyndman's articles on India.⁷⁵ According to Hyndman's later reflections, their conversations ranged widely. And it is clear that Hyndman benefited greatly from the time he spent in discussion with Marx. It is also clear that the breach between them was entirely avoidable too. For there was, to be sure, plainly 'no question' of malicious intent in Hyndman's failure to explicitly name Marx as the 'great author

⁷⁴ Eduard Bernstein, *My Years of Exile. Reminiscences of a Socialist*, trans. Bernard Miall (Westport Conn., Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 200. For Eleanor Marx's activities as a political activist see, above all, Yvonne Kapp, *Eleanor Marx. Vol 1. Family Life, 1855-1883* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1972); *Eleanor Marx. Vol. 2. The Crowded Years (1884-1898)* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1976); Tsuzuki, *The Life of Eleanor Marx*; and, more recently, Rachel Holmes, *Eleanor Marx. A Life* (London, Bloomsbury, 2014).

⁷⁵ H. M. Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1911), pp. 251, 247.

and original writer' to whom he averred he was 'indebted' in the preface to *England for All*.⁷⁶

Contrary to Engels's suggestion, Hyndman had no 'designing intent to suck Marx's brains and obtain the credit in English speaking countries for the results of Marx's work.'⁷⁷ Rather, 'he had not mentioned Marx for reasons of expediency', as Eduard Bernstein later explained.⁷⁸ *England for All* had been written for the first members of the Democratic Federation, the disparate collection of popular and middle-class Radicals that Hyndman had begun to assemble in the Spring of 1881 with the intention of 'reviving' what he described to Marx as 'the Chartist organisation'.⁷⁹ In other words, the book was addressed to an audience typically hostile to the notion of State intervention, and for whom Socialism connoted a 'foreign', not to say 'violent', phenomenon.⁸⁰ Far from providing a cloak for ulterior purposes, the 'stupid letters of excuse' that Hyndman sent in explanation, which Marx invoked in his letter to Sorge – 'that "the English don't like to be taught by foreigners," that "my name was so much detested, etc."' – were actually extremely close to the mark.⁸¹

Hyndman's judgements were well-calculated. In addition to his famous omission, his use of Radical language, and the caution he showed in deploying the word Socialism and its derivatives, showed acute sensitivity to the deeply ingrained predilections of the community of readers he addressed. Following repeated promptings from Engels, Marx's belated

⁷⁶ Bernstein, *My Years of Exile*, p. 205. H. M. Hyndman, *England for All* (London, Gilbert & Rivington, 1881), p. vi.

⁷⁷ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 53.

⁷⁸ Bernstein, *My Years of Exile*, p. 205.

⁷⁹ Hyndman, *Record*, p. 251.

⁸⁰ *The National Reformer*, for instance, the organ of the National Secular Society, was replete, once the Socialist movement had got off the ground, with those very charges. See, for example, Annie Besant's article, 'Socialism at South Place Institute', in its edition of May 11 1884, pp. 323-324.

⁸¹ Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 46, p. 163.

indignation, on the other hand, demonstrated a level of credulity to support Hyndman's retrospective impression that the author of *Capital* had, perhaps, never 'properly understood England'.⁸²

As other contemporary Socialists acknowledged, where Hyndman was concerned Engels clearly had an axe to grind. Moreover, in the light of Stedman Jones's recent work on the unacknowledged divergence of interests which had grown up between Engels and Marx in the years after 1870, it no longer seems quite so apocryphal to suppose that Engels's hostility was motivated by jealousy, by the fear, that is, of being displaced by Hyndman as Marx's wealthy backer. In fact, 'there is no reason', according to Stedman Jones, 'to disbelieve the testimony of Hyndman' about the anxiety caused to Marx and his family by their continuing dependence upon Engels's largesse.⁸³ To be sure, 'in poor health and with diminished energy', Marx 'was prepared to allow Engels to act for him' during the final decade of his life.⁸⁴ But, at the same time, in an effort to suppress disagreement, he also ceased to talk to Engels about his work.⁸⁵

No longer confident of proving the set of propositions that he had assembled between 1845 and 1848, Marx, on Stedman Jones's view, silently abandoned the project of completing *Capital* after the publication of its first

⁸² Notwithstanding, that is, the thirty years that Marx had spent living in the country or the mental labour that he had consumed in analysis of the 'capitalist mode of production' on its 'classic ground'. Bernstein, *My Years of Exile*, p. 227. Karl Marx, *Capital. A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production. Volume 1*, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (Moscow, Progress, 1954), p. 19.

⁸³ Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, p. 565. 'Marx was,' Hyndman wrote in the passage in question, "under considerable pecuniary obligations" to Engels. This, Mrs. Marx could not bear to think of. Not that she did not recognise Engels' services to her husband, but that she resented and deplored his influence over his great friend. She spoke of him to my wife more than once as Marx's "evil genius," and wished that she could relieve her husband from any dependence upon this able and loyal but scarcely sympathetic coadjutor. I was myself possessed at that time of good means,' he continued, 'and though I am quite sure that neither Marx nor Mrs. Marx had the slightest idea that I either could or would take the place of Engels if need arose, I am equally certain that Engels thought I might do so'. *Record*, p. 256.

⁸⁴ Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, p. 565.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

volume in 1867. On account of his investigations of pre-capitalist societies, increasingly, it seemed to Marx that the ‘capitalist mode of production’ was not ‘just a particular historical stage in the development of the ‘forces of production’’.⁸⁶ He began to cast doubt on the notion that ‘there were limits beyond which it could not further develop’.⁸⁷ Secondly, and more importantly, he also began to cast doubt on the idea that ‘an economy without a market could match the dynamism and creativity of capitalism’.⁸⁸ It was as a consequence of these discoveries that Marx famously ‘turned away from thought about Britain and western Europe and buried himself in Russian agrarian statistics.’⁸⁹

Before long, Marx had forsaken the universal terms in which he had originally framed his argument.⁹⁰ Discarding the assumption that ‘communal property and despotic rule went together’, he grew to accept the belief that it would be possible for Russia to make a beeline to socialism from the village commune.⁹¹ In a letter composed in 1881, he endorsed, therefore, the political strategy of the Russian Populists over the ‘orthodox’ plans of the embryonic Emancipation of Labour group.⁹² Concurrently, Marx gave up the notion too that in engendering social transformation in Asia, England ‘was the unconscious tool of history’.⁹³ Under the influence of his studies in pre-history, he ceased to praise ‘the breakdown of traditional and often communal’ social structures ‘by European merchants and

⁸⁶ Stedman Jones, ‘Marx’s *Critique of Political Economy*’, p. 152.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 156.

⁹⁰ Gareth Stedman Jones, ‘Radicalism and the extra-European world: the case of Karl Marx’, in Duncan Bell (ed.), *Victorian Visions of Global Order. Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth Century Political Thought* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 200.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 199.

⁹² Ibid., p. 198.

⁹³ Quoted in Ibid., p. 197.

colonisers.⁹⁴ Engels, on the other hand, continued to believe in the efficacy of Marx's theory in its original form: dogmatically stadial, rigidly universalist, and emphatically *post-capitalist*.⁹⁵

This, however, was the Marx known to Hyndman between 1880 and 1881: *anti-capitalist*, buoyant about the prospect of revolution in Russia, and increasingly dissatisfied with being financially dependent upon Engels. Like Engels, Hyndman had no truck with any 'romantic investment in the *Obshchina*'.⁹⁶ But he accepted nonetheless Marx's view that revolution might 'begin in the East'.⁹⁷ For a quite different reason he had shared Marx's opposition to Russia during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877, a position which earned him – portentously, as it would turn out – the disdain of William Gladstone and many popular Liberals sympathetic to the 'Bulgarian atrocities campaign'.⁹⁸

For Hyndman, 'the growing and aggressive despotism of Russia' presented by far the greater threat to European democracy than the 'decaying domination of the Ottoman Turk' over the Christian populations of south east Europe.⁹⁹ Moreover, he was not alone among Radicals in taking that line. Rather, Hyndman fell in behind others like Joseph Cowen and Edward Beesly, the latter being Marx's chief ally in Britain during the 1860s and 1870s, who also repudiated the position of the 'pro-Russian party'.¹⁰⁰ Hyndman did not, though, suffer from the same kind of 'visceral

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 204.

⁹⁵ Hobsbawm notably described Engels's discussion of the Narodniks as a 'brilliant and lucid return to the main Marxist tradition'. At the same time, he inconsistently warned against 'the modern tendency of contrasting Marx and Engels'. *How to Change the World*, pp. 162, 164.

⁹⁶ Stedman Jones, 'Radicalism and the extra-European World', p. 205.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, p. 582.

⁹⁸ See H. W. Lee and Edward Archbold, *Social Democracy in Britain. Fifty Years of the Socialist Movement* (London, Social Democratic Federation, 1935), p. 43.

⁹⁹ Hyndman, *Record*, p. 165.

¹⁰⁰ For Cowen see Eugenio F. Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, 1876-1906* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 40; and for the

Russophobia' as Marx.¹⁰¹ Indeed, he complained retrospectively that Marx 'carried this justifiable antagonism... to an abnormal extent', accepting 'David Urquhart's views on the East with a lack of direct investigation that surprised me in a man of so critical a mind.'¹⁰² Hence, when Eleanor Marx pressed him later to review the 'letters and disquisitions' that her father had written on the Eastern Question, Hyndman refused. He insisted that the 'book was not... worthy of its author'.¹⁰³

On India, matters stood differently. Hyndman had written about British policy in the subcontinent from as early as 1875.¹⁰⁴ Prompted initially by reading a pamphlet on the issue composed by the Positivist James Geddes, and harnessing subsequently statistical evidence collected by Dadabhai Naoroji, Hyndman condemned the 'drain' of wealth to Britain from India that caused, he held, its repeated famines.¹⁰⁵ He gave fullest expression to this 'drain' theory in two articles published in 1878 and 1879 in the *Nineteenth Century*, under the title 'The Bankruptcy of India'.¹⁰⁶ That Marx had read them 'with pleasure' is not to be doubted.¹⁰⁷ For, at that

Positivists see Christopher Harvie, *The Lights of Liberalism. University Liberals and the Challenge of Democracy, 1860-86* (London, Allen Lane, 1976), p. 193. For Marx's relationship with Beesly see Royden Harrison, 'E. S. Beesly and Karl Marx', *International Review of Social History*, 4/2 (1959), pp. 22- 58, 208-238. Before Beesly, Marx had had allies among the Chartists, in particular, George Julian Harney and Ernest Jones. See Kirk Willis, 'The Introduction and Critical Reception of Marxist Thought in Britain, 1850-1900', *The Historical Journal*, 20/2 (1977), pp. 422-424.

¹⁰¹ Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, p. 346.

¹⁰² Hyndman, *Record*, pp. 251-252.

¹⁰³ H. M. Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences* (London, Macmillan & Co, 1912), p. 139.

¹⁰⁴ H. M. Hyndman, *The Nizam of Hyderabad. Indian Policy and English Justice* (London, Yates and Alexander, 1875); *The Indian Famine and the Crisis in India* (1877).

¹⁰⁵ See Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics*, pp. 140-159.

¹⁰⁶ H. M. Hyndman, 'The Bankruptcy of India', *Nineteenth Century*, 4/20 (Oct. 1878), pp. 585-608. 'The Bankruptcy of India', *Nineteenth Century*, 5/25 (Mar. 1879), pp. 443-462.

¹⁰⁷ Hyndman, *Record*, p. 247.

time, Hyndman's humanitarian critique of British colonial policy matched Marx's hostility to European action in the extra-European world.¹⁰⁸

To be sure, Lenin was entitled to bemoan the lack of detail in Hyndman's recollections of his discussions with Marx.¹⁰⁹ As far as politics and theory is concerned they are without doubt insubstantial. But the above-quoted letter to Sorge does not 'settle the matter' of the nature of their short-lived relationship.¹¹⁰ On the contrary, the letter is deeply unreliable, both as a guide to Hyndman's breach with Marx and as an assessment of the upturn of interest in Marx's ideas. Firstly, as we have seen, Hyndman had good reason not to mention Marx by name in *England for All*. Secondly, Engels was clearly instrumental in driving a wedge between them. Thirdly, as we shall see in Chapter 2, Marx was also lagging in keeping abreast of the relevant literature. Marx's ideas had been put to use in other articles published in British periodicals dating back to December 1878. Contrary to the impression that Marx created, Rae, Hyndman, and Bax were not, therefore, trenching on completely virgin ground. Finally, before his exegesis of *Capital*, Bax had contributed other articles to *Modern Thought* which addressed the topic of Socialism. In them, Bax combined ideas borrowed from Auguste Comte, Edward von Hartmann, and Herbert Spencer. Had Marx been cognizant of those articles as well, it is more than likely that he may well have been considerably more hesitant about embracing their author.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ This is how Gregory Claeys described Hyndman's position in 'The 'left' and the critique of empire c. 1865-1900: three roots of humanitarian foreign policy', in Bell (ed.), *Victorian Visions*, p. 257.

¹⁰⁹ Lenin, *Collected Works*. Vol. 17, p. 309.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

¹¹¹ Marx, for instance, described Comte as 'pitiful' when 'compared with Hegel'. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 42. *Marx and Engels: 1864-*

On the above showing alone, then, the appraisal that Marx submitted to Sorge of the reception afforded to his ideas in Britain was plainly poorly judged. It would be a grave error, therefore, to take it as a reliable starting-point for a discussion of that process of engagement. By the same token, it would be an equally serious mistake to regard it as the threshold of the remaking of Socialism in Britain.¹¹² For that development did not begin either with the texts isolated by Marx. To assume that it did is to effectively reproduce the line of the old British Marxist historians who essentially made modern Socialism and Marx the same thing.¹¹³

In the first instance, the British reception of Marx's mature thought began with an article published in the March 1875 edition of the *Fortnightly Review*. It was written by one John Macdonnell, 'a keen amateur student of German politics and of political economy'.¹¹⁴ The reception afforded to Marx's ideas among commentators, like Macdonnell, exterior to the Socialist movement has been well dealt with elsewhere.¹¹⁵ However, the preamble to Hyndman's first article on Socialism has rarely been acknowledged in the secondary literature, still less discussed in detail.¹¹⁶ Yet, as will become apparent in Chapter 2, the discussion begun by Henry Fawcett in the November 1878 edition of the *Fortnightly Review*, the locus of advanced Radical opinion from 1865 onwards, forms a crucial part

1868 (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), p. 292. Safe to say, his opinion of Spencer cannot have been any higher, not to mention von Hartmann. The content of Bax's articles are expounded in Chapter 4.

¹¹² Both Bevir and Wolfe make this mistake. *Making of British Socialism*, p. 48; *From Radicalism to Socialism*, p. 67.

¹¹³ For a classic instance of this see Thompson, *William Morris*, p. 283, who refused to acknowledge the activities of Joseph Lane, Frank Kitz, and the Murray brothers, Charles and James, as Socialist in the 1870s. For a pertinent riposte see Stan Shipley, *Club Life and Socialism in Mid Victorian England* (London, Journeyman Press, 1971), Ch. 3.

¹¹⁴ John Macdonnell, 'Karl Marx and German Socialism', *Fortnightly Review*, 17/99 (Mar. 1875), pp. 382-391. Willis, 'The Introduction and Critical Reception of Marxist Thought in Britain, 1850-1900', p. 428.

¹¹⁵ See *Ibid.*, pp. 417-459; and Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men*, Ch. 13.

¹¹⁶ Wolfe noted the existence of one of the articles that form the subject of Chapter 2, but he did not discern its true importance. *From Radicalism to Socialism*, p. 70.

of the story.¹¹⁷ It is certainly true to say that Hyndman's initial comprehension and endorsement of Socialism cannot be properly understood in its absence.

Hyndman, in other words, had 'pilfered' from other thinkers besides Marx. In *England for All*, for example, he used John Stuart Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government* almost as freely as *Capital*. Chapter 3 considers that connection. But the articles published on Socialism in the periodical press between November 1878 and April 1880 provides the context for Hyndman's earliest constructive statement on the topic. The sources he drew upon were not Marx and Engels, but rather Fawcett, Mill, and William Cunningham, then a young historical economist and sympathiser of Charles Kingsley and T. H. Green.¹¹⁸

In this respect, Marx's concessive point – 'so far as it pilfers the *Capital*' – was really very revealing. For if the arguments that Hyndman borrowed from Marx occupied a relatively small portion of *England for All*, and stayed, furthermore, within the economic purview of *Capital*, then they did not figure at all in 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch', Hyndman's first article on Socialism. As Marx implicitly acknowledged, the remaining chapters of *England for All* derived their inspiration from an entirely different set of sources. The vocabulary of 'duty', 'enlightened patriotism', 'energy', 'individuality', 'true sagacity', and 'vigour' that rubbed shoulder to

¹¹⁷ It is worth noting that Beesly failed to convince John Morley, the editor of the journal, to publish a review of *Capital* following its publication at the end of the 1860s. He did, however, manage to persuade Morley to publish an account of the International Workingmen's Association, which he had been tasked by Marx to write in 1870. See Harrison, 'E. S. Beesly and Karl Marx', pp. 41, 51.

¹¹⁸ For Cunningham see Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform. English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914* (London, G. Allen & Unwin, 1960), pp. 188-201; and Gerard. M. Koot, 'English historical economics and the emergence of economic history in England', *History of Political Economy*, 12/2 (1980), pp. 194-199.

shoulder there with the conceptual repertory established by Marx betrayed Hyndman's Liberal intellectual credentials. By contrast, in 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch' Hyndman made no attempt to expound Marx's notion of 'unpaid labour' nor his theory of cyclical crises of 'overproduction'. The language and conceptual framework deployed in that earlier article was, rather, of a well-nigh exclusively Liberal stamp.¹¹⁹

Certainly, that understanding of Hyndman is not a common one. Instead, Hyndman has been routinely type-cast, not as a Socialist of Liberal heritage, but as 'a former Conservative', or in the most recent formulation of the same theme, as a Radical in the so-called Tory tradition.¹²⁰ Given the weight of evidence inimical to that view it is a strangely persistent mischaracterisation, at once both credulous in its uncritical acceptance of remarks issued by hostile contemporary critics of Hyndman – Gladstone,

¹¹⁹ For an account of the republican-inflected language of mid-nineteenth century Liberalism see any of the following four texts: H. S. Jones, 'John Stuart Mill as Moraliser', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 52/2 (1992), pp. 287-308; Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists. Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991), Ch. 3; E. F. Biagini, 'Liberalism and direct democracy: John Stuart Mill and the model of ancient Athens', in E. F. Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community. Liberals, Radicals, and Collective Identities in the British Isles, 1865-1931* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 21-44; and E. F. Biagini, 'Neo-roman liberalism: "republican" values and British liberalism, ca. 1860-1875', *History of European Ideas*, 29/1 (2003), pp. 55-72.

¹²⁰ Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 46, p. 251. In its latest formulation, Hyndman is cast as an intellectual successor to Edmund Burke, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey, Thomas Carlyle and Benjamin Disraeli. What these thinkers had in common, according to Bevir, was that they 'expressed their views through a medievalist historiography'; they 'expressed fears of political anarchy'; they 'evoked an English tradition of peaceful politics'; and they 'called for aristocratic statesmen to pilot the nation through the troubled waters that lay ahead.' As we shall see, however, to categorise the first three of these phenomena as Tory is to grossly misjudge their specificity. *Making of British Socialism*, pp. 66, 67, 68, 68-69. Hyndman's first biographer, F. J. Gould, by contrast, stressed Hyndman's liberal intellectual background. *Hyndman. Prophet of Socialism* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1928), p. 33. George Bernard Shaw also placed Hyndman more accurately, classing him with the 'free-thinking gentleman-republicans of the last half of the nineteenth century: with Dilke, Burton, Auberon Herbert, Wilfred Scawen Blunt, Laurence Oliphant: great globe-trotters, writers, *frondeurs*, brilliant and accomplished cosmopolitans'. 'Bernard Shaw on Hyndman and Himself', in Rosalind Travers Hyndman, *The Last Years of H. M. Hyndman* (London, Grant Richards, 1923), p. 287.

Engels, and various popular Liberals – and seemingly indifferent to, or simply incognizant of, his own self-descriptions.¹²¹

It is undeniably true that Hyndman came from a Conservative familial background and had many friends among members of the Conservative party.¹²² It is also true that, on more than one occasion, he sought to cultivate his connections from within that milieu – his interview with Benjamin Disraeli providing the most famous example.¹²³ It is, finally, undoubtedly the case, too, that Hyndman believed that reform-minded Conservatives were ultimately more dependable allies than Radicals of a Liberal hue.¹²⁴ Yet, Hyndman's connection to Liberalism and individual Radical Liberals was no less pronounced. It is fair to say that historians of late-nineteenth century British Socialism have been apt to forget the fluidity of relations among members of the 'governing classes'.¹²⁵ Hyndman's own memoirs read at times much like a roll call of the great and the good, decidedly bipartisan in the sympathies they catalogue: University Liberals such as Boyd Kinnear and Charles Pearson stand side by side with Conservative intellectuals like H. D. Traill; and Liberal politicians such as Robert Lowe and Henry Labouchere are warmly mentioned in one sentence

¹²¹ Gladstone denounced Hyndman as a Tory in 1880. See Chushichi Tsuzuki, *H. M. Hyndman and British Socialism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 30. See, also, *John E. Williams and the Early History of the Social Democratic Federation. With His Own Account of the Month's Imprisonment He Suffered for Speaking in Dod Street, Limehouse* (London, Modern Press, 1886), p. 4.

¹²² For Hyndman's background see Hyndman, *Record*, Ch. 1. To take just a single example, Hyndman had 'known well' three of the four members of the so-called Fourth Party, Arthur Balfour being the exception. *Ibid.*, p. 374.

¹²³ For Disraeli see *Ibid.*, Ch. 14. Hyndman also had considerable contact with Conservative figures in 1878 over the question of India. See *Ibid.*, pp. 162-163. He was not responsible, however, for obtaining so-called 'Tory Gold' in 1885. H. H. Champion was, rather, responsible for that particular, ill-fated affair. For details see John Barnes, 'Gentleman Crusader: Henry Hyde Champion in the Early Socialist Movement', *History Workshop Journal*, 60/1 (2005), pp. 124-125.

¹²⁴ See Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, p. 26.

¹²⁵ Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit. A Social History of Britain 1870-1914* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 184-185.

and Conservative statesmen like Lord Salisbury and Randolph Churchill are cited alike in the next.¹²⁶

There can be no mistake that Hyndman moved freely among the ‘well-connected, conventionally educated, comfortably situated, professionally successful, intellectually inclined men’ described so well by Stefan Collini – which is to say, that Hyndman was a ‘public moralist’. He was equally partial to the sense of identity, the aspirations, assumptions, and the conventions shared in common by that distinctive social group.¹²⁷ As Bax remarked, there was ‘nothing of the bohemian’ about him.¹²⁸ On the contrary, having graduated from Trinity Hall, Cambridge, read for the Bar in London, found employment in the higher journalism, and come forward in 1880 as an independent parliamentary candidate in the election of that year, Hyndman was a consummate man of his type.¹²⁹ Moreover, once that is recognised some of the purported ‘incongruities’ in Hyndman’s person can be accounted for more easily: not least, his refusal to abandon the traditional attire of a man of the gentlemanly class, the top-hat and frock-coat.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Hyndman, *Record*, pp. 52, 103-104, 106, 148. *Further Reminiscences*, pp. 412-426, 158. It is worth noting here that Hyndman might perhaps have become Lowe’s private secretary after having completed his degree.

¹²⁷ Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 3. The environment inhabited by Victorian public moralists is outlined in Chapter 2 of the same book. So, too, are the mores they cleaved to.

¹²⁸ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 97. Although there were other exceptions, in this, Hyndman cut a somewhat unusual figure among the typically bohemian middle class recruits to Socialism during the 1880s. See William Greenslade, ‘Socialism and radicalism’, in Gail Marshall (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siecle* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 79-80.

¹²⁹ Collini, *Public Moralists*, pp. 33, 37-38.

¹³⁰ As Thompson noted, ‘The difference in temperament between Morris and Hyndman is aptly illustrated in their respective attitudes to the ceremonial headgear of their class, the top hat. Morris, resigning from his Directorship, had sat on his, and he never bought another.’ *William Morris*, p. 294. It also made Hyndman vulnerable to treatment as a mere ‘figure of fun’. Geoff, Brown, ‘Documents: Correspondence from H.M. Hyndman to Mrs Cobden Sanderson, 1900-1921’, *Labour History Bulletin*, 22 (1971), p. 11.

Following the aborted election campaign, Hyndman read *Capital* in the same year on a voyage to the United States. He wrote to Marx from America: 'I have learnt more from its perusal, I think, than from any other book I ever read.'¹³¹ Prior to his long and faithful attachment to Marx, however, Hyndman's intellectual allegiances had first been with John Stuart Mill; then later, with Mill's protégé, John Morley. He regarded himself then, during the 1860s and 1870s, as a 'Republican' and a 'philosophic Radical'.¹³² Hyndman's overall political temper cannot be properly understood when sequestered from these anterior intellectual affinities. Equally as important, though, are Hyndman's other early, undeclared intellectual lodestars: Charles Dilke, his contemporary Trinity peer; Fawcett, his former lecturer in political economy; and Giuseppe Mazzini, Marx's erstwhile adversary in the International Workingmen's Association, Hyndman's previous acquaintance among European revolutionary exiles residing in London.¹³³

In his autobiography, Hyndman compared Mazzini to Marx. For Lenin, that Hyndman should do so was nothing short of absurd. More astonishing still, was that Hyndman should express admiration for the Italian patriot.¹³⁴ For Radicals of Hyndman's generation, though, the 'most conspicuous manifestation' of the political climate in which they grew up was precisely the ethos of 'transnational republicanism' that Mazzini

¹³¹ Quoted in Tsuzuki, *Hyndman and British Socialism*, p. 33.

¹³² *How I Became a Socialist. A Series of Biographical Sketches* (London, 1894), p. 3.

¹³³ Hyndman discusses Dilke in the following article: 'Sir Charles Dilke', *Fortnightly Review*, 102/611 (Nov. 1917), pp. 729-741. He mentions Fawcett only briefly in the first volume of his autobiography, where he dedicates a full chapter to a discussion of his relationship with Mazzini. But, taking frequency of reference as a measure of influence, throughout the 1880s Hyndman rarely failed to mention Fawcett in his work. *Record*, pp.159-160, 52-64.

¹³⁴ Lenin, *Collected Works*. Vol. 17, p. 307.

embodied.¹³⁵ In extolling the virtues of the architects of the modern Italian nation, Hyndman mirrored the main Radical current of the age.¹³⁶ Other reformers of the 1880s, like Arnold Toynbee, one of the few intellectuals of the era to also take Marx seriously, set great store by Mazzini's cosmopolitan patriotism.¹³⁷ Mazzini's greatness, according to Hyndman, had been obscured for Socialists of a younger age by his 'opposition to Marx in the early days of the "International," and his vigorous condemnation a little later of the Paris Commune'.¹³⁸ But, he insisted, 'Mazzini's conception of the conduct of human life' had been 'a high and a noble one'.¹³⁹ In 1883, Hyndman accordingly picked out for special praise the following passage from the 'General Rules' that Marx had composed for the International: 'no duties without rights, no rights without duties' – a concession made to the Mazzinian standpoint within the organisation.¹⁴⁰

Hyndman's endorsement of Mazzinian morality was a blunder. However, Hyndman would continue to express other heretical views. To the charge of 'Chauvinism', for example, Hyndman willingly pleaded guilty, if it meant privileging the role of the 'Celts-Teutonic peoples' in the transition to Socialism.¹⁴¹ However, the influential idea that Hyndman gave expression to 'a consistent strain of jingoist, anti-German – indeed racist

¹³⁵ Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, p. 449.

¹³⁶ See Harvie, *Lights of Liberalism*, Ch. 5. Hyndman even contemplated writing a monograph on the European revolutions of 1848-49, and borrowed material for the project from Mazzini himself. He did not see the project through, however. Instead, he wrote an admiring article on Count Cavour during the 1870s. 'Cavour', *Fortnightly Review*, 22/128 (Aug. 1877), pp. 219-243.

¹³⁷ Toynbee's father had been a friend of Mazzini, and Toynbee described him as "the true teacher of our age", estimating *The Duties of Man* 'more important than the work of Adam Smith and Carlyle.' See Alon Kadish, *Apostle Arnold. The Life and Death of Arnold Toynbee, 1852-1883* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1986), p. 2.

¹³⁸ Hyndman, *Record*, pp. 60-61.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁴⁰ H. M. Hyndman, *The Historical Basis of Socialism in England* (London, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co, 1883), p. 413. On the context of the concession see Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, pp. 463-466.

¹⁴¹ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 194.

– imperialism, which owed nothing to any British left-wing tradition’ is flatly erroneous.¹⁴² Rather than occupying an anomalous position, Hyndman again mirrored the main Radical current.¹⁴³ His uninhibited views on the beneficence of the ‘great democracies of the English speaking peoples’ were inspired not by Disraeli, but by Dilke, Mill, and the democratic Teutonism popular among University Liberals.¹⁴⁴ That Hyndman deployed a liberal ideal of England to support his particular Socialist end has been recognised in recent years by Julia Stapleton.¹⁴⁵ But for an earlier generation of scholars committed to a more cosmopolitan ideal of internationalism (or simply scornful of native traditions) Hyndman’s utterances on the nation and imperialism went down like a lead balloon, before, that is, they were ever subjected to proper scrutiny.¹⁴⁶

Proper scrutiny is not a phrase that readily suggests itself when dealing with the historiography on Hyndman. Certainly, a vividly

¹⁴² Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men*, p. 234.

¹⁴³ See the discussions in Peter Mandler, ‘Race’ and ‘nation’ in mid-Victorian thought’, in Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore, and Brian Young (eds.), *History, Religion, and Culture. British Intellectual History 1750-1950* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 224-244; H. S. Jones, ‘The Idea of the National in Victorian Political Thought’, *European Journal of Political Theory*, 5/1 (2006), pp. 12-21; and Georgios Varouxakis, ‘Patriotism’, ‘Cosmopolitanism’ and ‘Humanity’ in Victorian Political Thought’, *European Journal of Political Theory*, 5/1 (2006), pp. 100-118.

¹⁴⁴ H. M. Hyndman, *England for All* (London, Gilbert & Rivington, 1881), p. 168. Long before the recent burst of interest on these topics, Richard Koebner and Helmut Dan Schmidt pointed out that the themes broached in Disraeli’s Crystal Palace speech ‘were in no way original’. *Imperialism. The Story and Significance of a Political Word, 1840-1960* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 110.

¹⁴⁵ Julia Stapleton, ‘Political thought and national identity in Britain, 1850-1950’, in Collini, Whatmore, and Young (eds.), *History, Religion, and Culture*, p. 258. Claeys also provides a nuanced account of Hyndman’s *inter-nationalism* in *Imperial Sceptics*. See, also, Mira Matikkala, *Empire and Imperial Ambition. Liberty, Englishness and Anti-Imperialism in Late Victorian Britain* (London and New York, I. B. Tauris, 2011), p. 14.

¹⁴⁶ The study of patriotism by Socialist scholars began with Hugh Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914’, *History Workshop Journal*, 12/1 (1981), pp. 8-33. It reached a crescendo with Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack. Englishness, Patriotism, and the British Left, 1881-1984* (Rochester, NY, Boydell Press, 1998). But Hyndman still generally elicited contempt. For a stock-taking exercise and assessment of the Socialist historiography of patriotism see Miles Taylor, ‘Patriotism, History and the Left in Twentieth-Century Britain’, *The Historical Journal*, 33/4 (1990), pp. 971-987.

anachronistic approach set the keynote in the work of the British Marxist historians. For instance, on reflection, it would be strange to find that Hyndman had been immune to the ‘intellectual republicanism’ of his Radical peers or to the reconciliation of liberalism and imperialism brought off by Mill and Dilke.¹⁴⁷ By the same token, it would have been strange had Hyndman not ‘very poorly understood in 1880... the difference between a bourgeois democrat and a socialist.’¹⁴⁸ The ‘indelible association between Marx and a ‘Marxist’ language of revolution’ originated in the twentieth-century.¹⁴⁹ Before that, the difference was not so pronounced. In fact, by the 1860s, ‘it is probable that Marx had arrived at the reluctant acceptance of the representative state’.¹⁵⁰ For a time, ‘he became an enthusiastic supporter of the Reform League’s outdoor pressure to enlarge the franchise’.¹⁵¹ If Marx later turned his back on the period of moderation encapsulated in the ‘Inaugural Address’ and ‘General Rules’ of the International Workingmen’s Association, he still endorsed the view that ‘an English revolution’ was unnecessary.¹⁵² He did so, furthermore, in a letter to Hyndman.

In the period between 1880 and 1893 Hyndman traversed an intellectual gulf. However, much of that area he had covered by 1883. The odd detail might change here and there, and the overall inflection might subsequently alter, but from 1883 onwards Hyndman was a fully-fledged advocate of ‘scientific Socialism’. In June 1881, at the time of the publication of

¹⁴⁷ Harvie, *Lights of Liberalism*, p. 103.

¹⁴⁸ Lenin, *Collected Works. Volume 17*, p. 307.

¹⁴⁹ Gareth Stedman Jones, ‘Pressure from Without’: Karl Marx and 1867’, *Parliamentary History*, 36/1 (2017), p. 118.

¹⁵⁰ Gareth Stedman Jones, ‘History and Nature in Karl Marx: Marx’s Debt to German Idealism’, *History Workshop Journal*, 83/1 (2017), p. 112.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Marx and Engels, *Collected Works. Vol. 46*, p. 49.

England for All Hyndman's understanding of Marx was limited. It was circumscribed by access to two chief texts: the first volume of *Capital* in the French translation, and the *Communist Manifesto*, in addition, that is, to whatever he could glean in conversation from the man himself.¹⁵³ Hyndman was still unfamiliar with Engels's interpretative gloss. Nonetheless, if that initial apprehension bore little resemblance to the elaborate philosophy of history that he later imbibed from Engels, the chasm that Hyndman had bridged between his aborted candidature for parliament in 1880 and the formation of the Democratic Federation the following year was no less momentous.

At the outset of 1880 Hyndman was a reluctant reformer. In the space of just over a year Hyndman went from accepting 'the ordinary views of industry and finance', showing therefore sympathy for free trade in land but little enthusiasm for its nationalization; maintaining a hostile attitude to Home Rule in Ireland; and remaining sceptical about any wide-reaching extension of the franchise; to proclaiming the death of *laissez faire*; if not dropping his objections to Home Rule entirely, then to joining the Irish Land League; and to endorsing, finally, full manhood suffrage.¹⁵⁴ It is hard

¹⁵³ For the fortunes of Marx's and Engels's writings see Hobsbawm, *How to Change the World*, Ch. 8.

¹⁵⁴ Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, p. 39. For Hyndman's initial views on land see his election address in Lee and Archibald, *Social Democracy in Britain*, pp. 275-276; for Home Rule see H. M. Hyndman, 'Irish Needs and Irish Remedies', *Fortnightly Review*, 27/158 (Feb. 1880), pp. 208-226; for the franchise see Tsuzuki, *Hyndman and British Socialism*, pp. 29-30; for his revised views see *England for All*, pp. 1-6, 93, 112-130; and *Record*, p. 234. Like the new generation of Radicals orbiting Mill in the late-1860s and seventies, or Green and Toynbee at the beginning of the 1880s, Hyndman was in the vanguard of those who no longer regarded the personal qualities of an individual as sufficient insurance against a life of poverty. With ever-increasing vehemence, he began to stress the structural limits to self-improvement, making the familiar transition to a concept of 'freedom in the positive sense'. T. H. Green, 'Lecture on 'Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract'', in *Works of Thomas Hill Green. Vol. 3. Miscellanies and Memoir* (London, Longmans, Green & Co, 1911), p. 372. For a discussion of that transition see Stefan Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology. L. T. Hobhouse and Political Argument in England, 1880-1914* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979),

to say what caused that root and branch reversal.¹⁵⁵ But what is clear is that Hyndman was prompted to re-evaluate some of his assumptions and beliefs by the flurry of articles published in the periodical press.

Looking back upon his own contribution to that episode of discussion, Hyndman offered the following appraisal of 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch' in his autobiography: 'The article was not, certainly, such an one as I should write now.'¹⁵⁶ The reason Hyndman gave for the dissatisfaction he experienced in reading it thirty years later was the 'disinclination' it displayed 'to speak out plainly in favour of Socialism'.¹⁵⁷ 'Evidently,' he wrote, 'although theoretically a convinced Socialist, the underlying prejudice against the ideals of Socialism existing in my own mind still had its effect and prevented me from giving in the *Nineteenth Century* a proper survey of the situation.'¹⁵⁸ 'In fact,' he added, more accurately, 'I, unnecessarily as it seems to me now, accepted the limitations imposed by my surroundings.'¹⁵⁹

Hyndman wrote as a public moralist. The 'limitations imposed by my surroundings' meant not only the ideas on the topic of Socialism he then had available to him – typically hostile, even when sympathetic – but also the sense of identity conferred by the social status he inhabited. He shared 'the pretensions of the Victorian moralist to speak', as Collini put it, not from 'any merely partial or sectional interest', but from a vantage-point that nominally 'combined reflective disinterestedness with judicious realism'.¹⁶⁰

Ch. 1; and David Nicholls, 'Positive Liberty, 1880-1914', *The American Political Science Review*, 56/1 (1962), pp. 114-128.

¹⁵⁵ Claeys posits that anti-imperialism propelled Hyndman towards Socialism. *Imperial Sceptics*, p. 145.

¹⁵⁶ Hyndman, *Record*, p. 206.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

¹⁶⁰ Collini, *Public Moralists*, pp. 57, 58.

Thus, the article was presented as a hard-headed and sober appraisal of the social and political conjuncture.

Hyndman couched his argument in favour of the extension of ‘the principle of State management’ in the ostensibly reasonable and level-headed style typical of the genre for which it was written. The fiery prose which led to the discontinuation of John Ruskin’s assault on political economy in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860 was singularly absent.¹⁶¹ In the same way that Fawcett habitually refuted the charge of ‘hard-heartedness’ levelled against political economy with the claim that it was about as reasonable to suggest the same of ‘a proposition in Euclid’, Hyndman’s proposals were dressed in the gown of inevitability. His readers were therefore asked to wear a stoic smile in accepting their logic.¹⁶² Hyndman displayed the confidence befitting his role: the confidence, on the one hand, of having the ‘easy, intimate, even conversable, relationship with both Reason and History’ with which the public moralist was naturally furnished; and the confidence, on the other, ‘of having the ear of the important audience’ to whom it was plainly addressed: the ‘governing’ or ‘educated’ classes.¹⁶³

For a Socialist so steeped in the categories of ‘Marxism’, the absence of Marx’s notion of class struggle and its attendant idea that the State was simply a lever of class rule in Hyndman’s first public intervention in favour of a strongly attenuated form of modern Socialism was understandably galling. Like Mazzini and the Liberals mentioned above, in ‘The Dawn of a

¹⁶¹ Donald Winch, *Wealth and Life. Essays on the Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1848-1914* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 93.

¹⁶² Lawrence Goldman, ‘Henry Fawcett and the social science association: liberal politics, political economy and the working class in mid-Victorian Britain’, in Lawrence Goldman (ed.), *The Blind Victorian. Henry Fawcett and British Liberalism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 164.

¹⁶³ Collini, *Public Moralists*, pp. 58, 3.

Revolutionary Epoch' Hyndman disavowed conflict and advocated class reconciliation instead.¹⁶⁴ In place of 'the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie' expounded in the *Communist Manifesto*, Hyndman inserted an appeal to the 'upper classes', not to abnegate their leadership, but rather to assume it properly.¹⁶⁵ The 'natural leaders' of the community should preside over the work of 'social reorganisation', he insisted, yet 'not for the selfish advantage of their own insignificant section, but for the benefit of that class which, as has been well said, is really the nation.'¹⁶⁶

The identification of proletariat and nation that Hyndman invoked was a Comtian formula. It was also an equation frequently deployed by Morley.¹⁶⁷ Hyndman's nod of assent was telling. But the utterance was suggestive in more ways than one. Instead of serving as proof of Hyndman's nominal hankering for 'an alliance between aristocracy and people', the rest of the passage reveals that, here, too, Hyndman was actually borrowing from Mill's *Considerations*, the text he leant on heavily in *England for All*. That is to say, when Hyndman wrote that, 'the English people are not democratic in the Continental sense... they do respect their natural leaders', he was not evoking the spectre of Charles Egremont, the hero of Disraeli's Condition-of-England novel, *Sybil*.¹⁶⁸ Rather, Hyndman was simply restating Mill's exposition of English exceptionalism, according to which

¹⁶⁴ Harvie, *The Lights of Liberalism*. Christopher Kent, *Brains and Numbers. Elitism, Comtism, and Democracy in Mid-Victorian England* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1978).

¹⁶⁵ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London, Penguin, 2002), p. 232.

¹⁶⁶ H. M. Hyndman, 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch', *Nineteenth Century*, 9/47 (Jan. 1881), p. 15.

¹⁶⁷ Kent, *Brains and Numbers*, p. 114.

¹⁶⁸ Hyndman, 'Dawn', p. 15.

‘the political feelings of Englishmen’ did indeed amount to an ‘unhesitating readiness to let themselves be governed by the upper classes’.¹⁶⁹

While Marx was hardly forthcoming in his praise of *England for All*, he conceded nonetheless that its chapters on labour and capital ‘made good propaganda’. To have said otherwise would not have been tenable. For in its condemnation of the principle of laissez faire, Hyndman’s ‘little book’ eclipsed every other pronouncement issued since Ruskin’s *Unto this Last*.¹⁷⁰ ‘The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch’, on the other hand, was more cautious. To suggest that ‘Incredulity and amazement must have been the typical reactions’ to Hyndman’s prognosis of ‘approaching trouble’ is to completely misread the context of his plea to take action on social inequality.¹⁷¹ So far from being unique, the periodical press was replete with comparable warnings. Hyndman in turn commandeered them. In so doing, moreover, he took inspiration from neither T. E. Kebbel nor Traill, the Conservative intellectuals who also recorded their anxiety about ‘the future stability of society’. Commenting on their arguments in ‘The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch’, Hyndman inserted the phrase ‘from their Conservative point of view’ to perform the work of ideological differentiation.¹⁷² In conformity with his stated affinities, Hyndman looked

¹⁶⁹ John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, in *On liberty and other essays*, ed. John Gray (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 267.

¹⁷⁰ Neither the criticism of political economy levelled by Frederic Harrison (one of ‘Our Own Reds’, as the *Pall Mall Gazette* described the native Comtists), nor the more modest fault-finding exercise undertaken by John Elliot Cairnes could hold a candle to Hyndman’s critique. Frederic Harrison, ‘The Limits of Political Economy’, *Fortnightly Review*, 1 (Jun. 1865), pp. 356-376. John Elliot Cairnes, ‘Political Economy and Laissez Faire’, *Fortnightly Review*, 10/55 (1871), pp. 80-97. Hyndman, *England for All*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁷¹ Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, p. 67. Hyndman, ‘Dawn’, p. 1.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 13. T. E. Kebbel, ‘A Conservative View of the Elections’, *Nineteenth Century*, 7/39 (May. 1880), pp. 915-916; and ‘The Conservative Party and the Late Election: A sequel’, *Nineteenth Century*, 7/40 (Jun. 1880), pp. 1057-1064. H. D. Traill, ‘Political Optimism: A Dialogue’, *Nineteenth Century*, 8/42 (Aug. 1880), pp. 294-304. Hyndman, ‘Dawn’, p. 13.

instead to other Liberals for instruction, namely, to Fawcett and, above all, to Mill.

Socialism in the Periodical Press

According to one commentator, if ‘he had lived ten years longer, Mill would have probably been one of the first Fabians; Fawcett’, on the other hand, the commentator added emphatically, ‘would certainly have not’.¹⁷³ Of course, the depiction of Mill as a leading figure in the transition from Radicalism to Socialism is a familiar one.¹⁷⁴ So, too, is Fawcett’s resistance to that transformation.¹⁷⁵ The intention of this thesis is not to turn either idea on its head. But if Fawcett cannot be plausibly included as ‘one of the leading figures behind’ the remaking of Socialism, next to the usual candidates, Mill, Marx, and Henry George, he can be portrayed convincingly as an inadvertent contributor of considerable importance.¹⁷⁶ This chapter examines how the transition from Radicalism to Socialism played out. It charts how the concept of co-operation went from being considered an end in itself for the intellectuals involved in putting a form of modern Socialism on the theoretical map in Britain to becoming a merely transitional, or supplementary phenomenon to something more roundly Statist. It is against the backdrop of the discussion of these issues in the

¹⁷³ Giacomo Beccattini, ‘Henry Fawcett and the labour question in mid-Victorian Britain’, in Goldman (ed.), *The Blind Victorian*, p. 141.

¹⁷⁴ See, for example: Arnold Toynbee, “*Progress and poverty*,” *A Criticism of Mr Henry George. Being Two Lectures delivered in St. Andrew’s Hall, Newman Street, London* (London, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co, 1883), p. 7; Sidney Webb, ‘Historic’, in Bernard Shaw (ed.), *Fabian Essays* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1962), pp. 88, 90-91; Ernest Barker, *Political Thought in England, 1848 to 1914* (London, Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 12; Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, Ch. 2; and, more recently, Margot Finn, *After Chartism. Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848-1874* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 272, 307.

¹⁷⁵ A. V. Dicey called Fawcett the ‘brave defender of a lost cause’ in *Lectures on the Relation between Law and Public Opinion in England during the Nineteenth-Century* (London, Macmillan and Co, 1905), p. 255.

¹⁷⁶ Kinna, *William Morris*, p. 89.

periodical press between 1878 and 1880 that Hyndman's first intervention on the topic is judged. What emerges is the extent to which he was indebted to the figures who participated in that debate.

Doubtlessly, it is indeed a paradox that of all of Mill's disciples the most concrete assistance to the remaking of Socialism should have been provided by Fawcett. For Fawcett was the least willing of Mill's close followers to countenance even 'the slightest assault upon the principle of individual responsibility'.¹⁷⁷ Fawcett may well have been 'a keen student of Mill's double-decker treatises on logic and political economy'; he may have applauded Mill's stance on the greatest issues of the day, from the American Civil War to the Governor Eyre Controversy; he may have even advocated many of the social and political measures promoted by Mill – co-operative production, Thomas Hare's scheme of proportional representation, and the enfranchisement of women – taking him, therefore, into 'the real inner sanctum of discipleship'; but there were nonetheless definite limits to his fidelity.¹⁷⁸ Foremost among those limits was support for the kind of 'partial and fragmentary collectivism' with regard to land, education, and improving the conditions of labour, which Mill had begun to condone and actively champion during the closing years of his life, specifically from 1868 onwards.¹⁷⁹ Henceforward, on the question of State intervention, not to mention the 'wage-fund' doctrine and numerous other sticking points, they were separated by a notable gulf. Indeed, to Ruskin, Fawcett 'was the

¹⁷⁷ Henry Fawcett, 'The Recent Development of Socialism in Germany and the United States', *Fortnightly Review*, 24/143 (Nov. 1878), p. 615.

¹⁷⁸ Collini, *Public Moralists*, pp. 176-177, 179.

¹⁷⁹ Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, pp. 28, 30.

‘dismal science’ incarnate’.¹⁸⁰ For Hyndman, however, at the beginning of 1881, he was a useful repository of Socialist arguments.

To be sure, Fawcett upheld impeccably anti-Socialist beliefs. Nor was it just modern Socialism to which he was opposed. Fawcett was only slightly less unsympathetic to the ‘Communistic experiments’ associated with Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier in France, and Robert Owen in England.¹⁸¹ If his treatment of the latter group was marginally more benign, no amount of ‘dispassionate consideration’ could dent his ‘almost wilfully serene faith in the virtues of free competition’.¹⁸² For Fawcett, the early Socialists were ‘mistaken enthusiasts’ who underestimated the power of self-interest as an incentive to work.¹⁸³ But, so long as their efforts ‘were restricted to the formation of voluntary organisations, there was no reason to regard their proposals with apprehension’.¹⁸⁴ On the contrary, ‘no other charge could be brought’ against them on that front, ‘than that they showed too much zeal in their efforts to improve society.’¹⁸⁵ Indeed, even ‘their failure did something to benefit mankind’, insofar as such experiments trail-blazed the path for a more moderate form of co-operation.¹⁸⁶ Fawcett, of course, was one of the ‘loudest advocates’ of the co-operative movement during its post-Owenite phase: ‘its general adaptation to industrial undertakings’, he wrote, ‘would probably mark the greatest advance ever yet made in human improvement’; free of its former millenarian objectives, and content to retain the principle of competition, the new co-operative

¹⁸⁰ Goldman, ‘Henry Fawcett and the social science association’, in Goldman (ed.), *The Blind Victorian*, p. 164.

¹⁸¹ Henry Fawcett, ‘Modern Socialism’, in *Essays and Lectures on Social and Political Subjects* (London, Macmillan and Co, 1872), p. 11.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 1. Collini, *Public moralists*, p. 182.

¹⁸³ Fawcett, ‘Modern Socialism’, p. 7.

¹⁸⁴ Fawcett, ‘Recent Development of Socialism’, p. 606.

¹⁸⁵ Fawcett, ‘Modern Socialism’, p. 12.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

movement promised to resolve the conflict between labour and capital once and for all.¹⁸⁷

On this at least, Mill and Fawcett were almost at one.¹⁸⁸ Yet, unlike Fawcett, Mill was also prepared to give the systems of Owen, Fourier, ‘and the more thoughtful and philosophic Socialists generally’ a genuinely fair hearing, as opposed to the condescending kinds of ex post facto indulgence typically offered elsewhere.¹⁸⁹ If not convinced theoretically, Mill nevertheless displayed an affinity for non-revolutionary Socialist schemes that was clearly alien to the ‘strong, but comparatively limited, intellect’ of his famous disciple.¹⁹⁰ For example, for all his apparent tolerance, it is hard to envisage Fawcett describing ‘the picture of a Fourierist community’ as ‘attractive’, as Mill did, or calling Fourier’s system ‘a specimen of intellectual ingenuity... highly worthy of the attention of any student’.¹⁹¹ Like other proponents of the modern co-operative movement, Fawcett showed none of Mill’s muted unease ‘with the ideal of life held out by those who think that the normal state of human beings is that of struggling to get

¹⁸⁷ Goldman, ‘Henry Fawcett and the social science association’, p. 171. Fawcett, ‘Modern Socialism’, p. 13. For this transition see Pollard, ‘Nineteenth-Century Co-operation’, pp. 74-112; and Peter Gurney, ‘The Middle-Class Embrace: Language, Representation, and the Contest over Co-operative Forms in Britain, c. 1860-1914’, *Victorian Studies*, 37/2 (1994), pp. 253-286.

¹⁸⁸ See Gregory Claeys, ‘Justice, Independence, and Industrial Democracy: The Development of John Stuart Mill’s Views on Socialism’, *The Journal of Politics*, 49/1 (1987), pp. 122-147; and, more recently, Gregory Claeys, *Mill and Paternalism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013). For other, less historically sensitive, discussions of Mill’s relationship to Socialism see Bruce Baum, ‘J. S. Mill and Liberal Socialism’, in Nadia Urbanati and Alex Zacharas, eds., *J. S. Mill’s Political Thought. A Bicentennial Reassessment* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 98-123; Dale E. Miller, ‘Mill’s ‘socialism’’, *Politics, Philosophy and Economics*, 2/2 (2003), pp. 213-238.

¹⁸⁹ John Stuart Mill, *Chapters on Socialism*, in *On Liberty and Other Writings. With the Subjection of Women and Chapters on Socialism*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 260.

¹⁹⁰ Leslie Stephen quoted in Goldman, ‘Henry Fawcett and the social science association’, p. 176.

¹⁹¹ Mill, *Chapters*, pp. 273, 271. Fawcett got so far as, but no further than, ‘propounded with great ability’ in his *Manual of Political Economy* (London, Macmillan & Co, 1888), p. 102.

on'.¹⁹² In any case, even if Mill and Fawcett did hold broadly homologous views on co-operation, the former, unlike the latter, was nonetheless ready to impose serious constraints on the operation of competition in the meantime, before, that is, the 'merging or uniting of capital and labour' had been achieved.¹⁹³

These views were set out by Mill in a series of chapters composed for an unfinished book on the topic of Socialism written in 1869. They were first published in 1879, six years after Mill's death, in the February, March, and April editions of the *Fortnightly Review*. By that time, however, Mill's arguments had already begun to acquire an outmoded semblance. Certainly, non-revolutionary Socialism had moved on from the schemes of the thinkers that he invoked. It was no longer permissible to distinguish in 1879 between two classes of Socialism, one of which was pacific, gradualist, and voluntary, the other, revolutionary and Statist.¹⁹⁴ For a third class had emerged, which incorporated components of both, advocating neither the formation of intentional communities, nor a revolutionary seizure of power with a concomitant transfer of ownership in the means of production to the State at one stroke.

In Britain, the first articulation of that third class of Socialism was submitted by William Cunningham. It was published in the January edition of the *Contemporary Review* in 1879, just one month prior to the serialization of Mill's *Chapters*. It was followed by an article written by Moritz Kaufmann, the author of several books on the topic of Socialism

¹⁹² John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy. With some of their Applications to Social Philosophy: Books IV and V*, ed. Donald Winch (London, Penguin, 1985), p. 113.

¹⁹³ Fawcett, 'Modern Socialism', p. 14.

¹⁹⁴ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 260.

dating back to 1874, published, also, in the same periodical in April 1880.¹⁹⁵ The modern co-operative movement was seen by these Socialists as a transitional phenomenon, not – pace Mill – as an end in itself. Inspired in part by Albert Schäffle, a German professor of political economy, and an exponent of Socialism in a severely guarded form, they enunciated arguments for Socialism which were gradualist, moderate, *and* Statist, thus confounding the dichotomy established by Mill. Indeed, by 1879 the word Socialism had become virtually synonymous with the core element of its various modern expressions, all of which were chiefly characterised, ostensibly, by a belief in the State.¹⁹⁶ So much so, in fact, that Cairns felt obliged to register his regret that Mill had chosen to describe himself as a Socialist in his *Autobiography*, given the definite noncorrespondence between what Mill meant by that term and the meaning that it had subsequently contracted.¹⁹⁷ It was precisely this, too – the growing predominance of modern Socialism – that agitated Fawcett. If early Socialism was both essentially harmless, owing to its voluntary nature, and even compatible with a more limited type of co-operation, modern Socialism, insofar as it actively discouraged self-reliance, was, on the contrary, a positively dangerous force.

¹⁹⁵ Moritz Kaufmann, *Socialism. Its Nature, its Dangers, and its Remedies* (London, Henry S. King & Co, 1874); and *Utopias; or, Schemes of Social Improvement. From Sir Thomas More to Karl Marx* (London, C. Kegan Paul & Co, 1879).

¹⁹⁶ For an outline of the rich array of meanings assigned to the concept ‘the state’ at the century’s end see James Meadowcroft, *Conceptualizing the State. Innovation and Dispute in British Political Thought 1880-1914* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1995), Ch. 1. In the debate under discussion here, however, the state simply meant the government, both central and local.

¹⁹⁷ John Elliot Cairns, *Some Leading Principles of Political Economy Newly Expounded* (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1878), pp. 265-266. For a brief account of the controversy that has raged subsequently over the question of Mill’s Socialism see William Stafford, ‘How Can a Paradigmatic Liberal Call Himself a Socialist? The Case of John Stuart Mill’, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 3/3 (1998), pp. 325-345.

Unlike Mill, Cunningham and Kaufmann felt no need to reconcile their respective Socialist projects with the dictates of orthodox political economy. Responding to recent intellectual developments, they took their bearings, instead, from the burgeoning field of historical economics and evolutionary theory.¹⁹⁸ In these articles, the concept of economic man was dispensed with, and the co-operative movement was perceived only as a symptom of the growth of Socialism, rather than as a feasible alternative to it. Whereas Mill approached Socialism on primarily moral grounds, their perspective was fundamentally economic (precisely the part of Socialism, that is, that provoked Mill's dissent).

According to Cunningham, in accordance with 'the principle of natural selection' the 'fittest industrial system' would survive, and while 'a large field of industry' would no doubt remain in private hands for some time, it was possible still to 'confidently maintain that the dominance of *competition*' had already 'begun to pass away before the power of *public organisation*'.¹⁹⁹ On this view, no rapprochement between the two organising principles would be required. It was not that either Cunningham or Kaufmann morally objected as such to the system of co-operation envisioned by Mill, Fawcett, and other proponents of political economy, as Frederic Harrison had done previously in asserting that it had wholly forgotten the 'high aims' which made the systems of Saint-Simon, Fourier,

¹⁹⁸ For Cunningham's role in the formation of this field see Koot, 'English Historical Economics and the Emergence of Economic History in England', pp. 194-199. For a more general overview see *English Historical Economics, 1870-1926. The Rise of Economic History and Neomercantilism* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987) by the same author; Winch, *Wealth and life*, Ch. 9; and Stefan Collini, Donald Winch and John Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics. A Study in Nineteenth-Century History* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), Ch. 8.

¹⁹⁹ William Cunningham, 'The Progress of Socialism in England', *The Contemporary Review*, 34 (Jan. 1879), p. 255.

and Owen 'noble'.²⁰⁰ Rather, it was simply that Socialism was 'making slow but sure and steady progress' irrespectively, ensuring therefore the futility of any effort to stem its advance.²⁰¹

The unintended consequences of such suggestions may have been deemed ill-considered, or worse, by Fawcett and others. But Cunningham and Kaufmann could not be charged with intentional malevolence. The 'animating principle' of their Socialism was not the 'hate' that Mill attributed to other State-oriented Socialists.²⁰² On the contrary, they pitched their arguments in largely dispassionate, class-neutral terms, with Cunningham insisting – in a kind of proto-Wildean way – that Socialism was not only 'a remedy for the miseries of the poor', but that it provided, also, much-needed 'alleviation' for 'the cares of the rich' overwhelmed by the anxieties of business.²⁰³ Like Hyndman, who went on, appropriately, to borrow their positive arguments, they were, in short, by no means obstinate and alienated critics. They, too, like him, enjoyed an easy, intimate relationship with the audience they elected to address; and they, too, expected to be taken seriously.²⁰⁴ In other words, Cunningham and Kaufmann were no more inclined to visualize 'childish pictures of the social life of perfect human beings' than Fawcett or Mill.²⁰⁵ Nor were they any more tempted to 'demolish the framework of society as a prelude' to the 'period of greater and better-divided wealth' that they did indeed envisage.²⁰⁶ Instead, in anticipation of the seasoned Fabian stance on the

²⁰⁰ Frederic Harrison, 'Industrial Cooperation', *Fortnightly Review*, 3 (Jan. 1866), p. 492.

²⁰¹ Cunningham, 'Progress of Socialism', p. 245.

²⁰² Mill, *Chapters*, p. 274.

²⁰³ See Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', pp. 292-319. Cunningham, 'Progress of Socialism', p. 252.

²⁰⁴ In short, Hyndman, Cunningham and Kaufmann were all public moralists.

²⁰⁵ Cunningham, 'Progress of Socialism', p. 254.

²⁰⁶ Moritz Kaufmann, 'The Society of the Future', *The Contemporary Review*, 37 (Apr. 1880) p. 638. Cunningham, 'Progress of Socialism', p. 254.

question of the transition to Socialism, they called on the governing classes to concentrate on ‘smoothing the way for its advent’.²⁰⁷

The discussion of the merits and demerits of Socialism in the periodical press between 1878 and 1880 can be divided into two halves, with Cunningham and Kaufmann occupying one side of the argument, and Fawcett and George Jacob Holyoake the other. Mill’s posthumously published *Chapters*, meanwhile, settled the middle-ground between them, providing a useful repository of arguments and a source of legitimisation for the later contributors, but appearing, at the same time, as a notably archaic piece. Far too much had occurred in the interval, between 1869 and 1879, for Mill’s unfinished meditations on the subject to have retained their relevance and force. The experience of the Paris Commune, the onset of the so-called Great Depression, the experiments in municipalisation undertaken by Birmingham City Council (and elsewhere), the proliferation of positive legislation enacted chiefly by Disraeli, and the emergence of rival economic and military powers, all contributed to changing the fundamental nature of that discussion. Moreover, with the implosion of the Briggs co-partnership scheme in 1875 (which Fawcett had welcomed so enthusiastically), and other failures in the field of production, much of the wind had been taken from the sails of the co-operative movement too.²⁰⁸ Of course, these developments were necessarily absent from the analysis

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 253.

²⁰⁸ See Goldman, ‘Henry Fawcett and the social science association’, pp. 171-175; as well as Joss Betts, ‘John Stuart Mill, Victorian Liberalism, and the Failure of Co-operative Production’, *The Historical Journal*, 59/1 (2016), pp. 153-174. For the mutation of the principles underpinning much advocacy of profit-sharing schemes from the late-1880s onwards see Edward Bristow, ‘Profit-Sharing, Socialism and Labour Unrest’, in Kenneth D. Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History. Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (London, Macmillan, 1974), pp. 262-289.

presented by Mill. But in the analyses offered by the active participants in that debate they were, unsurprisingly, conspicuously present.

Furthermore, the beginning of that small burst of discussion also coincided, not accidentally, with the first of the five Anti-Socialist acts passed by the German Reichstag in October 1878. In fact, that legislation and the movement it was designed to suppress provided the immediate occasion for the articles published by Fawcett and Cunningham. However, their respective interventions in November and January had markedly discordant objectives. For while Cunningham endeavoured to silence the 'loud bursts of self-congratulation over the national common sense which saves us from being like our neighbours' by showing, on the one hand, how even Britain was 'slowly tending towards the realization' of Socialism, and arguing, on the other, why that was not a bad thing, Fawcett, contrarily – but not altogether dissimilarly – admonished his readers not to take that exceptionalism for granted; he sought to find ways instead to buttress that, fast diminishing, national peculiarity.²⁰⁹

Clothed as an exposition of the recent development of Socialism in Germany and the United States, but intended as a cautionary tale for a domestic audience, Fawcett's intervention in November 1878 was not his only set of musings on the subject of modern Socialism. Fawcett had already written an essay on the topic in 1872, following the fall of the Paris Commune, and the publication of Marx's pamphlet, *The Civil War in France*, both of which engendered a frenzied reaction of sensationalist journalism.²¹⁰ It was precisely that text, rather than the *Fortnightly* article, that Hyndman leant on most heavily in developing the negative section of

²⁰⁹ Cunningham, 'Progress of Socialism', p. 259.

²¹⁰ Willis, 'The Introduction and Critical Reception of Marxist Thought', pp. 424-427.

'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch'. The language of impending catastrophe and the call to arms for 'all thinking men' to take stock of 'the questions now being discussed by hundreds of thousands on the Continent' were drawn directly from, and inspired by, Fawcett's essay, as well as Mill's retroactive parallel speculations.²¹¹ What is most striking, however, about Fawcett's dual-contribution was both the shift in position it registered with regard to whom he identified as the potential agents of Socialism in Britain, and the much greater sense of urgency that his later article betrayed. In 1872, Fawcett was chiefly concerned by the number of 'English workmen' who had been 'powerfully influenced by Continental ideas'.²¹² Just six years later, however, that particular anxiety had subsided. By an act of transference, the 'educated' or 'governing' classes were now implicated as the agents of subversion instead. 'If Socialism should ever spread among the English people,' he wrote, 'it seems likely that the movement will receive encouragement from above rather from below.'²¹³ Moreover, on the remarkably inclusive criterion he established for measuring its progress, he did indeed have some cause for alarm.

Fawcett argued in his *Fortnightly* article that each 'fresh encroachment that the State is permitted to make on individual liberty, prepares a community more willingly to accept the principles of modern Socialism, by teaching them to rely less upon themselves and more upon the State.'²¹⁴ 'There is undoubtedly,' too, he added, 'at the present time, in our own country, a somewhat marked tendency to favour State

²¹¹ Hyndman, 'Dawn', pp. 1, 2. Compare, for example, Hyndman's opening remarks with the opening remarks in Fawcett's 'Modern Socialism', pp. 1-3, and in Mill's *Chapters*, pp. 224-228.

²¹² Fawcett, 'Modern Socialism', p. 21.

²¹³ Fawcett, 'Recent Development of Socialism', p. 615.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 614.

intervention.’²¹⁵ Fawcett, to be sure, had been ‘complaining about the drift of legislation’ in Britain since the late 1860s.²¹⁶ Long before Herbert Spencer and A. V. Dicey, he had been an energetic exponent of what has been aptly called ‘the germ theory of Socialism’.²¹⁷ The ‘germ theory’, because it was felt that every ‘fresh extension of the principles of centralisation or of industrial protection’ increased the danger of contagion.²¹⁸ Just as Spencer later rebuked politicians for failing to recognise the phenomenon of ‘political momentum’, Fawcett likewise insisted (in anticipation, too, of the Fabian viewpoint) that, ‘many of those who regard the spread of Socialism with so much alarm, have been unconsciously the chief promoters of the movement.’²¹⁹ Thus, by the standard of the ‘germ theory’, the inflation of ‘positively coercive’ legislation passed by the governments of both Gladstone and Disraeli from 1868 on, culminating in the Factory and Workshop Act of 1878, gave Fawcett good reason to feel a heightened sense of unease.²²⁰ No less disconcerting, however, was the inordinate ‘reaction against the extreme doctrines of *laissez faire*’ exhibited by fellow Radicals like Joseph Chamberlain, Charles Dilke, and John Morley.²²¹

Holyoake, meanwhile, Fawcett’s duelling partner, was more sanguine. While he, too, refused to surrender the principle of self-help (in

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Goldman, ‘Introduction ‘an advanced liberal’’, p. 15.

²¹⁷ John W. Mason, ‘Political Economy and the Response to Socialism in Britain, 1870-1914’, *The Historical Journal*, 23/3 (1980), p. 567.

²¹⁸ Fawcett, ‘Recent Development of Socialism’, p. 611.

²¹⁹ Herbert Spencer, *Political Writings*, ed. John Offer (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.85. Fawcett, ‘Recent Development of Socialism’, p. 611.

²²⁰ Helen Merrell Lynd, *England in the Eighteen-Eighties. Toward a Social Basis for Freedom* (London, Frank Cass, 1945), p. 156.

²²¹ Fawcett, ‘Recent Development of Socialism’, p. 614. Goldman, ‘Introduction ‘an advanced liberal’’, p. 15. For the ‘New Radicalism’ see Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, pp. 52- 65; and Finn, *After Chartism*, Ch. 7. For a more sceptical take see David Nicholls, ‘The New Liberalism: After Chartism?’, *Social History*, 21/3 (1996), pp. 330-342. Joseph Chamberlain, for instance, spoke derisively of ‘a fashionable political economy, very popular in the parliament of the rich’. ‘The Liberal Party and its Leaders’, *Fortnightly Review*, 14/81 (Sep. 1873), p. 297.

its traditionally austere form), he was much less concerned than Fawcett by the programme of ‘*Free Church, Free Land, Free Schools, and Free Labour*’ promoted by the Radical party.²²² Judging by the article he wrote on ‘State Socialism’ for the June edition of the *Nineteenth Century* in 1879, the legislation enacted by Gladstone’s first government caused him no real anxiety either. Instead, Holyoake took aim at two more conventional targets: the Comtists, and the Conservatives.²²³ ‘State Socialism,’ he argued, ‘so far as any taste exists for it in England, is a growth of Toryism.’²²⁴ As Disraeli’s tenure in office had ostensibly shown, the ‘English Conservatives’ were ‘not averse to giving State aid’ in exchange for the retention of power.²²⁵ The Comtists, however, had ‘always been in favour of appeals to the public treasury’.²²⁶ Unlike the Conservatives, for them, the provision of State aid was no mere question of immediate expediency. Indeed, according to Holyoake, ‘had they the capacity of converting the populace,’ the Comtists ‘would soon spread the infection of State Socialism among the working class.’²²⁷ Fortunately, the ‘English working class’ showed little susceptibility to ‘the plague of State Socialism’.²²⁸ If not completely invulnerable, their ‘steady, dogged instinct of self-sufficiency’ kept them largely immune.²²⁹ As yet, they showed no inclination to heed the advice proffered by Harrison and other Comtists to ‘look to the State’.²³⁰ Of course, Holyoake was no more in favour of the ‘despotism of Trade’ than the groups

²²² Ibid., p. 294.

²²³ For the Comtists see Harrison, *Before the Socialists*, Ch. 6; W. M. Simon, *European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century. An Essay in Intellectual History* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1963), Ch. 7 and Ch. 8; and, for a broader picture of the uptake of Comtian ideas, T. R. Wright, *The Religion of Humanity. The Impact of Comtian Positivism on Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986).

²²⁴ Holyoake, ‘State Socialism’, *Nineteenth Century*, 5/28 (Jun. 1879), p. 1114.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 1117.

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 1116.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 1118.

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 1120.

²³⁰ Frederic Harrison, *Order and Progress* (Brighton, The Harvester Press, 1975), p. 226.

he picked out for criticism.²³¹ He conceded that ‘a revolution of labour’ was indeed needed.²³² But it should proceed, he urged, ‘on the lines of self-help upon which it had been founded.’²³³ That is to say, Holyoake, like Fawcett, refused to relinquish his belief in the efficacy of ‘co-operative devices’.²³⁴

Despite the obvious failings of the co-operative movement, Fawcett and Holyoake stuck obstinately to the same Radical script that had been drafted for the 1850s and 1860s, a script, however, that seemed ever less credible as the 1870s wore on. Mill, of course, can be fully absolved of the charge of intransigence in his involuntary contribution to the debate on Socialism in the periodical press, owing both to the consistently pragmatic bearing he displayed there and the peculiar chronology of his articles. Industrial partnership now appeared much more problematic than he had supposed, and the notion of industrial monopolies no longer seemed so far-fetched either.²³⁵ But these were simply analytical failures, or deficient prognoses, rather than signs of inflexibility. Yet, while Cunningham and Kaufmann endeavoured to meet some of the new phenomena thrown up during the course of the 1870s head on, anticipating, or actively revising, Mill’s now seemingly anachronistic judgements, Fawcett and Holyoake refused to budge from the intellectual territory that they formerly shared with Mill, irrespective of recent developments. Unlike most of Mill’s other disciples, they showed no ‘impulse in the Socialistic direction’, even under duress of events.²³⁶

²³¹ Holyoake, ‘State Socialism’, p. 1114.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 1120.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1118.

²³⁵ Mill, *Chapters*, pp. 267, 252.

²³⁶ Henry Sidgwick, ‘The Economic Lessons of Socialism’ *The Economic Journal*, 5/15 (1895), p. 341. Quoted in Winch, *Wealth and Life*, p. 203.

The discussion of Socialism that Fawcett initiated in 1878 was not, however, incorrigibly polarised as a result. There were certain points upon which all contributors to the discussion were agreed. For example, the 'increasing separation of employers and employed, and the widening gulf between the very wealthy and the very poor' was uniformly deplored, and 'the character of the English working classes' was likewise confirmed to be of a uniquely congenial kind by all.²³⁷ In fact, Cunningham and Kaufmann did not object even to Fawcett's avowal that the various inroads that the State had been 'permitted to make on individual liberty' had prepared the 'community more willingly to accept the principles of modern Socialism'.²³⁸ What they did not accept, however, was the reason that Fawcett gave for that assent. That is to say, for Cunningham and Kaufmann, it was not the nominal depletion of self-reliance that made Socialism a more immediately realizable prospect. Rather, Socialism had been rendered feasible by 'the increase of *effective public spirit*' engendered, in part, by some of these changes.²³⁹ The action of the Education Department and the State's assumption of the postal and telegraph services provided evidence of what could be accomplished by 'centralized authority where private effort' had been 'comparatively unsuccessful'.²⁴⁰ The same was true of the experiments in municipalisation undertaken by 'local bodies' like Birmingham.²⁴¹ But it was, above all, 'the habit of associating together for public purposes' which ultimately ensured the superior efficacy of '*public organization*'.²⁴²

Mill, to be sure, may still have required some convincing, but Cunningham had at least answered one of his most long-standing and

²³⁷ Fawcett, 'Recent Development of Socialism', p. 611. Mill, *Chapters*, p. 226.

²³⁸ Fawcett, 'Recent Development of Socialism', p. 614.

²³⁹ Cunningham, 'Progress of Socialism', p. 254.

²⁴⁰ Kaufmann, 'Society of the Future', p. 632.

²⁴¹ Cunningham, 'Progress of Socialism', p. 256.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 255, 256.

pointed objections. According to Mill, the practicability of Socialism on the scale of Owen's or Fourier's villages was one thing, and could admit of no dispute. But to 'attempt to manage the whole production of a nation by one central organisation' was a 'totally different matter'.²⁴³ Cleaving still to the concept of economic man, Mill argued that, as matters stood, in the majority of cases, 'public and social feelings' provided no substitute for self-interest as an economic motive power.²⁴⁴ He was 'quite ready to admit' that 'this inferior efficacy' was 'not inevitable'.²⁴⁵ Nonetheless, 'much time' would be required, he insisted, to redress the 'general infirmity' in matters of 'public spirit'.²⁴⁶

Cunningham, by contrast, was considerably more optimistic when it came to chronology. Starting from an ontological position akin to Marx's, he argued that 'regard for the public weal' had actually already become effective due to structural changes that had materialised in the economy.²⁴⁷ For similar reasons, he was also less bullish than Mill about the prospect of the continued efficiency and success of private industry and individual competition. The emergence of foreign rivals and the tendency toward monopoly intrinsic to the '*regime* of competition' had begun to neutralise 'the stimulus of private enterprise'.²⁴⁸ By increasing the scale on which production was carried on, monopoly capitalism had prepared the ground for the ethos of collectivism that would eventually replace it economically too. Thus, armed with the notion of '*effective public spirit*' and other context-specific details, Cunningham was able to repudiate antecedently – successfully or otherwise – many of the complaints about the so-called

²⁴³ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 262.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Cunningham, 'Progress of Socialism', p. 257.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

‘revolutionary Socialist’ schemes that Mill outlined in his unfinished *Chapters*. Soon after, the baton was taken up by Kaufmann.

Over and above the content of Cunningham’s efforts, Kaufmann chiefly took umbrage with Mill’s suggestion that ‘the compression of individuality’ would ‘be much greater under Communism’.²⁴⁹ Long before the philosophical Idealists had given the concept real currency and theoretical weight, he invoked the idea of ‘self-development’ in response. Rather than diminish, individuality would expand, he argued, in the same proportion as the ‘spiritual and moral development of the people’ had already been *materially* catered for.²⁵⁰ Like his Idealist successors, Kaufmann emphasised that the opportunity to develop one’s faculties presupposed certain anterior conditions. By itself, self-help would never suffice. The depression no doubt had helped to focus minds on some of the structural causes of poverty, and Kaufmann believed, just as T. H. Green and his followers did, that a change of social organisation would activate a corresponding release of latent individual potential. However, to realise this ideal the sacrosanctity of the notion of economic independence harboured by Liberals like Fawcett and Holyoake would have to give. The concept of self-reliance would have to take a new conceptual load, compatible with State intervention.²⁵¹

As we have already heard, this much had been recognised by Mill well over a decade in advance. Prompted by Robert Lowe’s obstructive use of arguments derived from political economy in the House of Commons, he

²⁴⁹ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 270.

²⁵⁰ Kaufmann, ‘Society of the Future’, p. 236. For a synoptic account of Idealism in Britain see Andrew Vincent and Raymond Plant, *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship. The Life and Thought of the British Idealists* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1984). For Green, in particular, see Melvin Richter, *The Politics of Conscience. T. H. Green and his Age* (Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1964).

²⁵¹ See Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology*, pp. 31-32; and, also, Green’s famous statement, ‘Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract’, pp. 365-386.

set about establishing a considerable number of exceptions to the '*Laissez-Faire* principle' in 1868.²⁵² He recorded some of them in his fragmentary work on Socialism, which he began the following year. For example, he did not rule out there the possibility of nationalizing 'great joint-stock enterprises' (still few in number, he argued) like the railways, insisting that 'when not reserved by the State itself' they 'ought to be carried on under conditions prescribed' by it.²⁵³ Furthermore, it was perfectly conceivable that 'all the land might be declared the property of the State, without interfering with the right of property in anything which is the product of human labour and abstinence.'²⁵⁴ But that, of course, did not prevent Mill from declaiming against the 'very imperfect and one-sided notion of the operation of competition' observed by 'Socialists generally'.²⁵⁵ Mill readily conceded that the moral 'judgement of Socialism on existing institutions and practices and on their results' was scarcely contestable.²⁵⁶ But 'the various plans... propounded for doing better' still left much to be desired.²⁵⁷

Setting aside the marked flaws of the particular metonym, it is, then, highly unlikely that Mill would have elected to insert himself among the first Fabians had he lived to see the Society's formation.²⁵⁸ Unlike the far-reaching social evolutionary prognoses outlined by Cunningham and Kaufmann, and echoed later by Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb, in which planning gradually superseded competition, the entire tenor of his *Chapters*

²⁵² Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, pp. 55-56.

²⁵³ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 252.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ Modern Socialism was not, firstly, simply commensurate with the Socialism of the Fabian Society in Britain. Nor, secondly, did the first Fabians resemble their later progeny. Thomas Davidson, the leading light within the Society, struck a far more romantic note than the intellectual trend-setters who succeeded him, stressing the need for a revolution within the individual subject rather than a fundamental reorganisation of the economy. See Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, Ch. 5; Pierson, *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism*, Ch. 5; and Bevir, *Making of British Socialism*, Ch. 12.

was prophylactic. Mill's posthumously published articles were singularly lacking in bold, optimistic pronouncements. The hinge on which his main argument rested was not some idiosyncratic combination of 'Comte, Darwin, and Spencer', but rather the Reform Act of 1867.²⁵⁹ That is to say, for Mill, it was not only an 'obligation of justice' to institute at least some modest modifications to the laws of property as a concession to sound economic reason, but in the light of the extension of the franchise it was an 'injunction of prudence' too.²⁶⁰ Moreover, on this, Mill was of one mind with Hyndman, who was no less keen in 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch' to keep the 'principle of State management... within certain limits'.²⁶¹

Published on the same day as the Employers Liability Bill came into operation, Hyndman's article was temporally removed from the other contributions to the discussion of Socialism in the periodical press.²⁶² The entire controversy had taken place within the space of fourteen months, whereas Hyndman's article was separated from Kaufmann's, the final instalment, by a further year. Moreover, he made no effort either to situate his article against that specific background, neither citing where appropriate, nor invoking the relevant names to legitimate some of its more obviously more contentious claims. It was presented, rather, as a blank slate. Yet 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch' belonged no less squarely to the discussion carried on there for that reason. In fact, Hyndman could

²⁵⁹ Webb, 'Historic', p. 63.

²⁶⁰ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 275.

²⁶¹ Hyndman, 'Dawn', p. 17.

²⁶² Lynd, *England in the Eighteen-Eighties*, pp. 157-158. Like the Irish Land Act of 1881, Lynd explained that the 'Act of 1880 was a milestone in legislation, not only because it established the precedent of legislation for the benefit of the mass of the working population, but also because after its enactment it became a new center of struggle over property versus welfare.' Ibid. p. 158.

have been no more indebted to that specific repository of arguments – and in Fawcett’s case, its spiritual antecedent – for the substantive remarks that he belatedly posited on the same topic in the *Nineteenth Century*. His article should therefore be read as a long-delayed extension to it.

The article that Wolfe chose to isolate as the inaugural moment of the remaking of Socialism in Britain embodied three principal aims, none of which were unique. In the first instance, Hyndman, echoing Fawcett and Mill, sought to demonstrate the immanence of the threat that Socialism posed in Europe. Across the Continent, he argued, ‘poor men bound together by an enthusiasm for what is little more than an abstraction’ had resolved ‘to carry out that programme which to most of us Englishmen seems a very midsummer madness, of elevating the whole race of civilised men by a complete change of the conditions in which man has yet been civilised.’²⁶³ Hyndman warned that: ‘Those schemes for the reorganisation of society which Fourier, Saint Simon, Owen, Lassalle, Marx, and others propounded are no longer the mere dreams of impracticable theorists or the hopeless experiments of misguided enthusiasts’; rather, they had ‘been taken down from the closet of the Utopian investigator into the street,’ and moved ‘vast masses of men to almost religious exasperation against their fellows.’²⁶⁴

Here, the coupling of the modern Socialists, Ferdinand Lassalle and Marx, with their earlier forebears betrayed a lack of caution absent elsewhere in the article. Hyndman’s exposition of the progress of Socialism in Europe was typically more judicious. He showed himself well-informed about the movements in France, Germany, and other European countries. No doubt, Marx had helped to give some shape to Hyndman’s

²⁶³ Hyndman, ‘Dawn’, p. 10.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 2.

understanding of those contemporary national movements during their first meetings together in late 1880. And, indeed, Hyndman's observations on Russia registered the retreat that Marx had performed in the 1870s on the unilinear character of his theory.²⁶⁵ But what is most striking about Hyndman's account is the critical distance that he put between himself and the Socialist theorists he invoked, the author of *Capital* included.

Hyndman's unflattering description of the modern Socialist movement and its intellectual pilots was emphatically not a rhetorical strategy; allusions to the process of 'so-called primitive accumulation', cyclical crises of overproduction, and the phenomenon of surplus-value were omitted for an altogether quite different reason. Simply stated, Hyndman had not imbibed much of Marx's theory. His primary frame of reference was provided, instead, by Fawcett, and he made no bones about recycling some of the latter's seemingly unpromising claims. Thus, the poor law was declared by Hyndman to be 'distinctly communistic'.²⁶⁶ Indeed, 'it is difficult to see how any system could be more completely so in intention', he argued, in direct imitation of Fawcett, 'than that which puts it in the power of an able-bodied man to live upon the earnings or savings of others, because he has been unlucky or lazy himself.'²⁶⁷ The tone paralleled that of his former lecturer in political economy, too – shrill, despite its objective pretensions. Like Mill's *Chapters*, as well as Fawcett's twin-cautionary statements on Socialism, the tenor of Hyndman's article was anticipatory and preventative rather than outrightly constructive. Unlike Cunningham and Kaufmann's contributions, he did not elucidate a rigorous and

²⁶⁵ See Stedman Jones, 'Radicalism and the extra-European world', p. 198. Hyndman may also have been familiar with Matthew Arnold's paean to the French peasantry in 'Equality', *Fortnightly Review*, 23/135 (Mar. 1878), pp. 313-334.

²⁶⁶ Hyndman, 'Dawn', p. 12. Fawcett issued that claim in both 'Modern Socialism', p. 27, and in 'Recent Development of Socialism', pp. 607-608.

²⁶⁷ Hyndman, 'Dawn', p. 12.

sustained analysis of the superiority of Socialism to Capitalism as a mode of production. Nevertheless, he did borrow, unashamedly, from Cunningham's materialist inquiry to fulfil the second aim of his article, namely, to show that 'Communism in the sense of State and Municipal management' was 'making head continuously', not only in Europe, but in Britain and the other 'Anglo-Saxon communities' too.²⁶⁸

Hyndman averred – as Cunningham had done before him – that,

whilst we are arguing about Communism, and in some directions upholding the old idea that competition, not State management, must be the rule, we ourselves are slowly advancing, without perhaps observing it, towards the system which when proposed in all its bluntness we denounce as a chimera under the present circumstances of mankind.²⁶⁹

He recycled the assertion posited by Cunningham and Kaufmann that, taken together, the postal and telegraph arrangements, the proliferation of instances of municipal organisation and control, and the free-school system, all provided evidence that competition was 'being given up as a principle in favour of organisation for the common benefit'.²⁷⁰ Yet, in contrast to Cunningham and Kaufmann's overall line of argumentation, Hyndman's contention was not underpinned by a social evolutionary theory, less still by a 'historical materialist' philosophy. Rather, like Mill, Socialism, for Hyndman, was primarily a question of expediency. In fact, it is no exaggeration to suggest that the third and final aim of Hyndman's article – to organize a compromise position – revealed a remarkable affinity between his sense of the specific conjuncture and the intellectual legacy bestowed in Mill's *Chapters*. Indeed, in insisting that those to whom the article was addressed urgently recognise the implications of the extended franchise in the context of ubiquitous poverty and injustice, while the

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

circulation of Socialist ideas increased meanwhile in intensity on the Continent, Hyndman was perhaps truly Mill's rightful heir.

Of course, there can be no doubt that the main thrust of Hyndman's, notably imprecise, idea of 'social reorganisation' substantially exceeded the much more limited purview of Mill's own economic proposals. There was no mention in 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch' of co-operative stores, industrial partnership, and small-scale practical experiments. Instead, Hyndman argued that 'the tendency of the time' involved 'the principle of the State or Commune's control.'²⁷¹ Just what that meant exactly in practice was not entirely clear, since he expounded no specific programme of reform. But it certainly did not entail 'dealing with all property for the benefit of the mass, and not for the individual'.²⁷² Indeed, the following catalogue of grievances gives some indication of the relatively modest scope of Hyndman's ambition:

The large blocks of city property concentrated in the hands of individuals; the entire exclusion of the poor man from the possession of the land; the manner in which in municipal arrangements the poorer quarters are sacrificed to the rich; the indifference too often shown to the interests of the wage-earning class when whole neighbourhoods are swept out of their place to benefit the community without proper provision for the housing of the inhabitants elsewhere; the impossibility of obtaining real consideration for the needs of the masses in the matter of recreation, fresh air, and pure water, especially where vested interest are involved; the general inclination to consider the ratepayer first and the benefit of the population afterwards; these and other like points are now being talked over by men who have experienced the evils of the present system, and are ready by fair means to put an end to them.²⁷³

Hyndman and Mill shared a fear of 'ignorant change and ignorant opposition to change'.²⁷⁴ That meant that 'some of the cherished theories of

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 17.

²⁷³ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

²⁷⁴ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 224.

ordinary political economy' had to be overridden.²⁷⁵ But it did not mean that society was 'prepared to transcend all previous experience of human motives' to realise a 'materialist Utopia'.²⁷⁶

If, then, Cunningham and Kaufmann can be said to have articulated, according to the criterion established by Mill, a form of 'revolutionary Socialism' with the revolution taken out, then Hyndman's call for reform was even more circumspect. While the latter pair forecast a total eclipse of the Capitalist mode of production, it seems that Hyndman did not envisage any particularly far-reaching change. Hyndman's article in the *Nineteenth Century* may have been a patchwork assembled from arguments borrowed from Cunningham, Fawcett, and Mill, but on a map of the discussion of Socialism in the periodical press the coordinates of his location were doubtlessly nearest to the latter's position. Certainly, there was nothing remotely utopian in what he had to say there. Nor was there the slightest sign of any of the 'social and psychological stresses' that induced others to embrace Socialism during the 1880s.²⁷⁷ While that was also true of Cunningham and Kaufmann, Hyndman betrayed a reticence akin to Mill's that was plainly absent from their much more optimistic analyses. Neither did that change dramatically in Hyndman's next significant literary effort, *England for All*, the manifesto he drafted for the founding conference of the Democratic Federation in June 1881.

²⁷⁵ Hyndman, 'Dawn'. p. 16.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁷⁷ Stanley Pierson, *British Socialists. The Journey from Fantasy to Politics* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 17.

3

Social Radicalism

If the re-reading of 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch' produced a certain unease for Hyndman from the vantage-point of thirty years hence, his next effort – that which led to the breach with Marx – caused him no such retrospective discomfort. It may have taken him two years to 'comprehend fully Marx's economics and philosophy of history', or at least Engels's rendering of that so-called philosophy of history, but the policy 'sketched out for Home, Colonial, Irish, Indian and Foreign affairs' in *England for All* was still pertinent, he held, in 1911.²⁷⁸ Although historians have typically characterised Hyndman's book as a 'programme of Tory Democracy' with a summary of Marx's economic ideas thrown in for good measure, it was precisely the fact that the Tory Democrats, or Fourth Party, led by Randolph Churchill had begun to 'make way' in 1880 that convinced him to 'take the plunge' and formulate a definite policy of his own for the consideration of the first members of the incipient Democratic Federation – that, and the no less important fact, of course, that 'Liberalism had given itself over to Coercion and Aggression'.²⁷⁹

Two issues loomed particularly large during the opening months of 1881 and 1882. Taken together, they precipitated a wave of disaffection

²⁷⁸ Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, p. 361. Hyndman, *Record*, p. 228.

²⁷⁹ Bevir, *Making of British Socialism*, p. 73. Tsuzuki, *Hyndman and British Socialism*, p. 42. Hyndman, *Record*, p. 227. Churchill also told Hyndman, however, that, as Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Salisbury's second administration, he meant to implement Hyndman's 'palliative programme'. Ibid. p. 379. For Churchill and the Fourth Party see Lynd, *England in the Eighteen Eighties*, pp. 209-219; R. E. Quinault, 'Lord Randolph Churchill and Tory Democracy, 1880-1885', *The Historical Journal*, 22/1 (1979), pp. 141-165; and R. E. Quinault, 'The Fourth Party and the Conservative Opposition to Bradlaugh 1880-1888', *The English Historical Review*, 91/359 (1976), pp. 315-340.

from the Liberal Party among members of London's Radical clubs, making the prospect of a revival of Chartism, as Hyndman had hoped, seem possible for a short window of time. Namely, the government's policy in Egypt, but, above all, its policy in Ireland.²⁸⁰ 'It seems incredible, at this time of day,' Hyndman wrote in his autobiography,

that a Liberal government, headed by Mr. Gladstone and comprising such men as the extreme Radical Mr. Chamberlain then was, Sir Charles Dilke, Mr. Henry Fawcett, and others, with a strong Radical party behind them numbering some one hundred and thirty strong, should have been engaged in putting down in Ireland, by sheer force of arms and police brutality and buck-shot, those ordinary commonplace liberties which on this side of the Channel are regarded, too laxly, as beyond even Whig interference; and that this should have been done in the interest of one of the worst land-owning classes that ever preyed upon a community, whose outrageous proceedings that very same Government had vainly attempted to check.²⁸¹

'It was an extraordinary position', he rightly concluded.²⁸² And by taking steps to form a federation of the advanced Radical workingmen's clubs of the capital in the spring of 1881, Hyndman sought to capitalise on its fallout.

At its inception, the Democratic Federation comprised an unsteady union of estranged popular Gladstonian Liberals, similarly disaffected metropolitan Secularists, and a smaller number of followers of the former Chartist leader, James Bronterre O'Brien.²⁸³ Its preliminary meetings were

²⁸⁰ Although it is less well remarked upon, Edward Royle noted the bombardment of Alexandria, for example, as a factor driving a wedge between Radicals and the Liberal Party. *Radicals, Secularists, and Republicans. Popular Freethought in Britain, 1866-1915* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1980), p. 219. As did Martin Crick, *History of the Social Democratic Federation* (Keele, Keele University Press, 1994), p. 18.

²⁸¹ Hyndman, *Record*, p. 237.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ For O'Brien see Alfred Plummer, *Bronterre. A Political Biography of Bronterre O'Brien, 1804-1864* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1971); Ben Maw, 'The democratic anti-capitalism of Bronterre O'Brien', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 13/2 (2008), pp. 201-226; Ben Maw, 'Bronterre O'Brien's Class Analysis: The Formative Phase, 1832-1836', *History of Political Thought*, 28/2 (2007), pp. 253-289. For the O'Brienites, on the other hand, see Bevir, *Making of British Socialism*, Ch. 6; Mark Bevir, 'Republicanism, Socialism, and Democracy in Britain: The Origins of the

attended by the Positivists, Edward Beesly and Henry Crompton, and the Radical M.P. Joseph Cowen was expected to play a leading role in its prospective career. As it turned out, the leadership fell to Hyndman. But there was nothing inevitable about that eventuality.²⁸⁴ Within months of its founding conference, most of the Radical clubs withdrew from the nascent organisation when an election committee formed to assist the Land League candidate in the Tyrone by-election in September, headed by Hyndman, issued a manifesto criticising ‘the hollowness and hypocrisy of capitalist Radicalism.’²⁸⁵ Thenceforth, the Federation was left only with its O’ Brienite backers and the disparate, and numerically slight, set of popular Radicals convinced by Hyndman’s arguments in *England for All*.²⁸⁶ Its constricted ranks were replenished by an influx of middle-class supporters at the end of 1882 in the wake of Henry George’s tour of England. However, it was the outgoing mass of popular Radicals, adherents of the kind of ideas articulated by Fawcett and Holyoake – devotees of anti-Statist, pro-free trade, and Malthusian attitudes – that encompassed the imagined community of readers that Hyndman envisaged for the manifesto he wrote for the new organisation.²⁸⁷ That being so, it was specifically tailored therefore to persuade that audience, and Hyndman attempted to strike the right chords to resonate with that distinctively inauspicious milieu.

Radical Left’, *Journal of Social History*, 34/2 (2000), pp. 351-368; and Shipley, *Club Life and Socialism*, Ch. 1. For a more general picture, in addition to Shipley’s account, see Crick, *History of the Social Democratic Federation*, Ch. 1.

²⁸⁴ M. S. Wilkins, ‘The Non-Socialist Origins of England’s First Important Socialist Organization’, *International Review of Social History*, 4/2 (1859), pp. 199-207.

²⁸⁵ Tsuzuki, *Hyndman and British Socialism*, p. 47.

²⁸⁶ Those like J. Morrison Davidson who recorded saying ‘inwardly’ to himself after reading *England for All*, “Be this man Tory-Democrat or not, this little book of his contains the root of the matter, and no mistake.” *The Annals of Toil. Being Labour-History Outlines, Roman and British. In Four Parts. Part IV* (London, William Reeves, 1899), p. 438.

²⁸⁷ See Eugenio Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment, Reform. Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004); Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*; and Royle, *Radicals, Secularists and Republicans*.

As Edward Pease later put it, *England for All* was an ‘extremely moderate proposal’.²⁸⁸ Notwithstanding Hyndman’s retrospective affirmation of its content, it exhibited both continuities and discontinuities with ‘The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch’, his previous intervention on the topic of social reform, which he had, of course, retrospectively spurned. Aside from its length and detail, it evinced at least two pronounced breaks with its predecessor. The first fissure was represented by the social group to whom Hyndman appealed. Between January and June 1881, Hyndman’s confidence in the upper classes as potential agents of change had begun to recede, and in *England for All* he exhorted the working class to ‘rely on their own power and peaceful strength’ instead.²⁸⁹ The second rupture, meanwhile, was that Hyndman had completely absorbed Marx’s critical analysis of capitalist production, and he recycled it wholesale in that contribution along with allusions to a materialist view of history.

In many respects, Hyndman’s unauthorised manifesto was clearly an altogether more audacious and iconoclastic affair. But, despite its fiercely unheterodox leanings, and its numerous rhetorical flourishes, the programme remained, above all – like its precursor – resolutely Millian in detail nonetheless. Economically, the specific ‘stepping-stones to further development’ that Hyndman advanced stayed more or less within the remit of the framework set out in Mill’s *Chapters*.²⁹⁰ The intention, of course, was to eventually go further. But in the meantime Hyndman cleaved to a strikingly modest set of legislative targets: the railways for management by the State, for example, and mines, factories, and workshops merely for supervision. Moreover, in a more general sense too, Hyndman’s programme

²⁸⁸ Edward Pease, *The History of the Fabian Society* (New York, E. P. Dutton & Company, 1916), p. 24.

²⁸⁹ Hyndman, *England for All*, pp. 64-65.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

remained firmly in step with the arguments of other New Liberals like T. H. Green and Arnold Toynbee.

Like ‘The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch’, *England for All* was not an original work. Rather, it faithfully mirrored, or was parasitic to, a series of extant intellectual and political trends. In addition to its debt to Marx and Mill, it took its bearings on the question of the trajectory of English history from Thorold Rogers, another figure, like Cunningham, associated with the emerging historical school of economics.²⁹¹ Its proposal to intensify, rather than reverse, imperial federation, and transform the House of Lords into a Great Council for the direct representation of all of Britain’s colonies and dependencies, was likewise little more than an inchoate imitation of the prevailing tendency among many public moralists during the 1870s, spanning both Conservative and Liberal political camps, to construct elaborate plans for a range of hybrid colony-state architectures.²⁹² Finally, the ‘positively coercive’ legislation that had accrued over the preceding years, and intensified in quality since 1880, which had previously caused such alarm to Fawcett, provided a series of precedents upon which Hyndman could hang his own constructive arguments.

Of these acts of legislation, the Irish Land Bill was undoubtedly the most important. Toynbee, for instance, described it in 1882 as a ‘most

²⁹¹ As Raphael Samuel observed, ‘the first generation of Marxists grew up in the shadow of Thorold Rogers... The early Marxists took over the liberal-radical version of ‘people’s history’ virtually intact’. ‘British Marxist Historians’, p. 39. Needless to say, Stanley Jevons, the chief protagonist of marginal utility analysis, the second rival school to have emerged in the 1870s as a competitor to, a much traduced, orthodox political economy was correspondingly rebuffed by Hyndman. For an account of marginalism’s ascendancy see Winch, *Wealth and Life*, Ch. 5.

²⁹² Duncan Bell, ‘The Victorian idea of a global state’, in Bell (ed.), *Victorian Visions of Global Order*, p. 160. Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain. Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 17.

startling piece of Socialistic legislation’, and positioned it historically as the direct heir to the Factory Acts of the 1830s.²⁹³ Like Hyndman, Toynbee regarded ‘the principle of the Irish Land Act’ as progressive. ‘That Act’, he insisted,

marks not only an epoch in the history of Ireland, but also in the history of Democracy. It means – I say it advisedly – that the Radical party has committed itself to a Socialist programme. I do not mean the Socialism of the Tory Socialist; I do not mean the Socialism of Robert Owen; but I mean that the Radicals have finally accepted and recognised the fact... that between men who are unequal in material wealth there can be no freedom of contract.²⁹⁴

Donald Winch usefully characterised Toynbee’s standpoint as a ‘One Nation version of New Liberalism’, and that cap fits Hyndman perfectly too.²⁹⁵ The Socialist arguments propounded by Hyndman and Toynbee coincided not only in the constraint of their – immediate – respective ambitions, but also in their appeal to the republican discourse of duty articulated by Mazzini and others.²⁹⁶ Moreover, similar parallels are available between Hyndman and Toynbee’s mentor, Green, the quintessential Victorian exponent of ‘neo-Roman’ values.²⁹⁷

In the first instance, both Hyndman and Green were agreed that freedom from constraint or compulsion – ‘negative liberty’ – was freedom of only a nominal kind. Freedom was meaningful, for both men, only in a ‘positive sense’, as a ‘positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying’.²⁹⁸ Hyndman’s rhetoric may have

²⁹³ Arnold Toynbee, ‘Are Radicals Socialists?’, in *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution in England. Popular Addresses, Notes and Other Fragments* (London, Longmans, Green & Co, 1908), p. 232.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 233.

²⁹⁵ Donald Winch, ‘Arnold Toynbee’s Industrial Revolution’, <https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/intellectualhistory/islandora/object/intellectual-history%3A49/datastream/OBJ/view> accessed 23 May 2017, p. 17.

²⁹⁶ For details see fn. 119.

²⁹⁷ Biagini, ‘Neo-roman liberalism’, pp. 58-62.

²⁹⁸ Green, ‘Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract’, p. 371. Naturally, the language of positive and negative does no justice to the complexity of the commitments held. But Green nonetheless deployed the affirmative term and is

attained Ruskinian proportions in places in *England for All*, in contrast to Green's more measured prose, but he and Green were nonetheless at one in the opinion that 'it is the business of the State', as the latter put it, 'to maintain the conditions without which a free exercise of the human faculties is impossible'.²⁹⁹

Equally, both men refused to believe that anything much would have changed over the preceding fifty years in the absence of State intervention. As Green enquired rhetorically:

Could the enlightened self-interest or benevolence of individuals, working under a system of freedom of contract, have ever brought them [the suffering classes] into a state compatible with the free development of the human faculties? No one considering the facts can have any doubt as to the answer to this question. Left to itself, or to the operation of casual benevolence, a degraded population perpetuates and increases itself.³⁰⁰

Unlike Hyndman, or the late Mill for that matter, Green did not deploy the language of slavery to describe the condition of a certain stratum of workers in Britain. But he did not refrain from designating, at the same time, various forms of freedom of contract as 'an instrument of disguised oppression'.³⁰¹

Of course, the parallels between Hyndman and Green were merely incidental. Not surprisingly, given his rationalist credentials, Hyndman showed no interest in philosophical idealism. By the same token, despite a subsequent affinity, Toynbee's utterances on Radicalism and Socialism were issued *after* Hyndman had written *England for All*, playing therefore no part either in its creation. Certainly, there is no suggestion here of

often held, misleadingly, to be the progenitor of the concept itself. For a brief account of the history of the dichotomy among political philosophers see Quentin Skinner, 'A Third Concept of Liberty', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 117 (2002), pp. 237-268.

²⁹⁹ Green, 'Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract', p. 374.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

³⁰¹ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 227. Green, 'Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract', p. 382.

anything more, at this stage, than mere resemblance. Rather, the consonance between the various writings of Hyndman, Green, and Toynbee serve simply as a useful index of contemporary Radical thought.³⁰² In any case, the lack of certain qualifying clauses in Hyndman's book – namely, the retention of the language of self-help – constitutes a notable discrepancy between his work and that of other Radicals, providing an indication of the course that he alone would later travel.³⁰³ For while Green, Toynbee, and other New Radicals of their generation attempted to manipulate the criteria for applying existing commendatory terms like self-help and self-reliance, Hyndman, by contrast, simply dropped them from usage altogether.

In *England for All*, Hyndman concentrated his innovatory energy on neutralising the negative evaluative force attached to the words communism and Socialism.³⁰⁴ Hyndman, to be sure, maintained his pronounced reservations about Socialism in its numerous Continental configurations. But, like Cunningham and Kaufmann before him, he assigned value to the enhanced role assumed by the State in modern Socialist theories. He sought to legitimize the gradualist and constitutional acts and proposals hitherto stigmatized as Socialistic – State provision of fitting dwellings for the working classes, for example, or the Irish Land Bill – not by reversing the evaluative charge of such descriptions, but by portraying them rather as preposterous.

³⁰² In a pamphlet dedicated to 'the startling revolution which is taking place in the Economic Theories held by the Party of Progress', the Tory historian J. H. Round observed that, 'a new school of thought has arisen in the "Liberal" party, called into existence by the growing repugnance to the formulas of the Doctrinaires. Let us term it the *Foreign Socialistic School*', he wrote. 'Its method... is *forcible interference with the working of Natural Laws*. Its aim is the compulsory establishment of an Ideal and un-natural society.' 'The Standard of the Liberals with 'Freedom' for its motto,' he proclaimed, 'is being hauled down before our eyes and, on that of the Radicals, the word 'Repression' is being already unfolded by the Breeze.' *The Coming Terror. Socialism* (Brighton, John Beal & Co, 1881), pp. 3, 9-10, 12.

³⁰³ Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, p. 72.

³⁰⁴ On this ideological strategy see Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Volume One*, pp. 152-153.

In 1885 Arthur Balfour announced to the delegates of the Industrial Remuneration Conference that ‘In England it has been land rather than capital,’ which had historically borne the brunt of attacks on ‘existing social arrangements’.³⁰⁵ ‘In England,’ he continued, ‘where socialism has never as yet taken profound root, political events and economic theories have combined to turn the attention of would-be social reformers in the direction of land’.³⁰⁶ In issuing these dual-statements, Balfour was undoubtedly right. As Mill’s remarks in *Chapters* cited in the previous section indicate, the possession of land had been attributed a peculiar status in Radical discourse: the ‘unearned increment’ of mere ownership – as opposed to the merited profits of active cultivation – rendered it an exceptional case, exempt from the principles governing the rights enjoyed by other forms of property.³⁰⁷ Besides, owing to a series of ostensibly anomalous laws its distribution in Britain was also abnormally limited, thus fomenting the more moderate, and more pervasive, Cobdenite demand for free trade in land.³⁰⁸ In the years between the Second Reform Act and the formation of the Democratic Federation, the most notable extra-parliamentary organisations took the question of land as their central concern: the Land Tenure Reform Association formed by Mill and his supporters in 1868, the working class Land and Labour League founded a year later, and

³⁰⁵ A. J. Balfour, ‘Land, Land Reformers, and the Nation’, in *Industrial Remuneration Conference. The Report of Proceedings and Papers* (New York, Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), p. 337.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

³⁰⁷ For a discussion see Ursula Vogel, ‘The Land-Question: A Liberal Theory of Communal Property’, *History Workshop Journal*, 27/1 (1989), pp. 106-135.

³⁰⁸ F. M. L. Thompson provides a historical outline in ‘Land and Politics in England in the Nineteenth Century’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 15 (1965), pp. 23-44.

Bradlaugh's short-lived Land Law Reform League established in 1880.³⁰⁹ Yet Balfour's observations gestured, also, at something more: it shed light, too, on the task confronting any would-be social reformer just as anxious to attack capital, as others had been, traditionally, to mount an assault on land.

In order to legitimate strikes on the former category of property, social reformers like Hyndman would, in short, have to attempt to show how at least some of the appraisive language of land reform could be applied to their own prospective schemes.³¹⁰ In the period before he became a 'doctrinaire', Hyndman therefore sought to bring that precise manoeuvre off.³¹¹ Hyndman hoped to demonstrate that the concept of the 'unearned increment' on land was commensurable with Marx's notion of surplus value, and he deployed a Radical vocabulary in an effort to make the charge stick. Thus, in *England for All*, he argued that, 'Those who own the soil, and those who manufacture... live alike in luxury and in idleness out of the sweat and the misery of others.'³¹² Hence, Joseph Chamberlain who extracted 'unearned profit' from 'the working classes by extra labour, and owns a rigid monopoly,' was condemned for duplicity (along with the other 'plutocrats' peopling the Liberal benches in the House of Commons) by simultaneously 'posing as a leader of the democracy.'³¹³ It 'behoves us to be careful,' he counselled,

lest, in getting rid of the excessive influence of one dominant class, we do but strengthen the power of a meaner and a worse one in its place. If possession of land – as all reformers agree – should be

³⁰⁹ See John Saville, 'Henry George and the British Labour Movement', *Science & Society*, 24/4 (1960), pp. 321-333; and Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, pp. 52-65, 79-93.

³¹⁰ See Skinner, again, *Visions of Politics. Volume One*, Ch. 8.

³¹¹ G. D. H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought. Volume 2. Marxism and Anarchism, 1850-1890* (London, Macmillan, 1954), p. 409.

³¹² Hyndman, *England for All*, p. 63.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

regulated in the interests of the country in time to come, so also must capital, machinery, and the national highways. Conservatism has come to mean the dominance of landowners: Liberalism has been degraded to the service of capitalists. There is little perhaps to choose; but for the people it is to the full as important in the future that capital should be controlled as the land.³¹⁴

Simply stated, Hyndman was at pains to make clear that, under conditions of an increasingly monopolistic capitalism, the opposition between the industrious and the idle was no less relevant to the social relations surrounding the use of capital than it had been, and still was, when it was a question of land. In the new conjuncture, he suggested, Mill's notion of the 'wages of the labour of superintendence' was obsolete.³¹⁵

For a social reformer trying to convince an audience primarily composed of popular Gladstonian Liberals and Secularists schooled in the parallel politics of Bradlaugh of the need for an unprecedented expansion of the State and a concurrent circumscription of free-trade – a very tall order, needless to say – there can be no doubt that the strategy that Hyndman deployed was a shrewd one.³¹⁶ However, the purported identity between certain aspects of the Radical tradition and Marx's critique of capitalism was not actually so far-fetched. For different reasons, W. H. Mallock, for example, also pointed to their congruity: 'the whole Liberal party,' he wrote, 'if it does not consciously endorse these doctrines, at least more or less timidly, is pledged to many of their corollaries.'³¹⁷ The 'doctrines' that Mallock had in mind belonged to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Marx, and Lassalle, and he summed them up in the following aphorisms: "Property is

³¹⁴ Ibid., p. 86.

³¹⁵ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 258.

³¹⁶ Hyndman was neither 'oblivious to the unorthodoxy of his economic radicalism', nor was it in 'his innocence' that he 'drew very different conclusions about the necessity of revolutionary change from Marx.' Kinna, *William Morris*, p. 96. Firstly, Hyndman's use of the language of 'idleness', 'theft', and 'monopoly' was political, not abstractly economic. And, second, rather than innocent on the question of transition, Hyndman was peculiarly well-informed, as we heard in Chapter 1, about what Marx actually thought.

³¹⁷ Mallock, 'Civilization and Equality', *Contemporary Review*, 40 (Oct, 1881), p. 661.

theft.’ ‘Capital is fossil labour.’ ‘Physical labour is the source of all wealth and culture’.³¹⁸ As Mallock essentially implied, and Hyndman attempted to realise, if capitalists could be shown to be simple beneficiaries of the labour of others with little or no input of their own, land and capital could be brought convincingly under the same umbrella. The novelty of *England for All* resided, not in its practical proposals, but in its execution of that rhetorical move.

For Ruskin, social reform demanded only procuring ‘a sufficient quantity of honesty in our captains [of industry]’.³¹⁹ The Positivists too went no further than the notion of ‘moralisation’.³²⁰ For Hyndman, though, social reform entailed the complete displacement of the capitalist class from the field of production. However, in the interim, Hyndman cleaved to a set of demands in keeping with Toynbee’s binary-principle that State interference was justified, firstly, ‘where individual rights conflict with the interests of the community’, and, second, ‘where the people are unable to provide a thing for themselves and that thing is of *primary social importance*’.³²¹ ‘To expect that the nation will at once abandon its idea of fancied individual freedom, in favour of a real collective freedom which shall consult and care for the interests of all, is a chimera’, Hyndman wrote. ‘But seeing, as we cannot but see,’ he continued, ‘the plain economical basis of so much of the

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ John Ruskin, ‘Unto This Last’, in *Unto This Last and Other Writings*, ed. Clive Wilmer (London, Penguin, 1997), p. 163. Ruskin was certainly no Socialist, as he was only too keen to make clear in the same text. Ibid., pp. 201-202. For an analysis see P. D. Anthony, *John Ruskin’s Labour. A Study of Ruskin’s Social Theory* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983).

³²⁰ ‘The problem of the future is to change the mode in which capital shall be used, not the persons by whom capital shall be held,’ wrote Harrison in ‘Moral and Religious Socialism’, p. 460.

³²¹ Toynbee, ‘Are Radicals Socialists?’, pp. 233-234.

misery we all deplore, is it not reasonable that more rapid steps should be made in the direction of general improvement?’³²²

Hyndman confined his initial proposals to the following: [i] an eight hour day; [ii] free and compulsory education; [iii] compulsory construction by the municipalities and county assemblies of fitting dwellings for the working classes; and [iv] the provision of really cheap transport. Hyndman entertained no illusions that ‘these changes would check the fearful crises consequent upon the capitalist system of production’.³²³ All the same, he was confident that ‘they would lead the way gradually to a better system’.³²⁴ ‘Private enterprise has been tried and found wanting’, he insisted:

laissez-faire has had its day. Slowly the nation is learning that the old hack arguments of “supply and demand,” “freedom of contract,” “infringement of individual liberty,” are but so many bulwarks of vested interests, which inflict misery on the present, and deterioration on the next, generation, in the name of a pseudo-science of government.³²⁵

Notwithstanding either the intimation of Marx or the ratcheted up rhetoric, Hyndman maintained the wary attitude to impulsive action recommended by Mill and other Liberal social reformers. That is to say, he maintained the attitude displayed in ‘The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch’. It goes without saying that Hyndman no longer viewed Socialism primarily as a question of expediency. But Hyndman still sought to erect a barrier between his own programmatic proposals and the schemes proffered by Continental Socialists, as the following statement, and strategic slippage, made clear:

Mere destruction for its own sake – anarchy, where the demon of Socialism may take the foremost and the hindmost together – is not in accordance with the views of Englishmen. To pull down a system,

³²² Hyndman, *England for All*, p. 84.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

however bad, they must see that something is ready to take its place.³²⁶

To the four demands enumerated above, Hyndman added three more; and, in so doing, he re-engaged directly with Mill's *Chapters*. Writing in 1869, Mill argued that,

The richest competitor neither does nor can get rid of all his rivals, and establish himself in exclusive possession of the market; and it is not the fact that any important branch of industry or commerce formerly divided among many has become, or shows any tendency to become, the monopoly of a few.³²⁷

In *England for All*, Hyndman issued a temporally fractured retort. 'This question of monopolies is rapidly coming to the front', he replied:

The old notion that competition would always come in to serve the community, has proved wholly fallacious... the power of the great companies to fight off those whom they consider intruders, has been exercised without any scruple whatever. All the recent evidence tends in the same direction. The railway companies treat their customers as if the public had been specially created by some beneficent providence for these monopolists to prey upon and get interest for shareholders... and we see in America that the system is carried yet further.³²⁸

Despite Mill's disinclination to believe that competition might eventuate in monopoly, he commended a course of action for that eventuation nonetheless. Mill argued that,

businesses which require to be carried on by great joint-stock enterprises cannot be trusted to competition, but, when not reserved by the State to itself, ought to be carried on under conditions prescribed, and, from time to time, varied by the State, for the purpose of insuring to the public a cheaper supply of its wants than

³²⁶ That utterance constituted the single exception to what has been termed here Hyndman's neutralizing strategy. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

³²⁷ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 252.

³²⁸ Hyndman, *England for All*, pp. 103-104. Here, Hyndman drew on knowledge of the concentration of capital in the United States gleaned during his recent visit to that country in 1880. Two months after publishing 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch', he offered his reflections on the political situation in the United States in the following article: 'Lights and Shades of American Politics', *Fortnightly Review*, 29/171 (Mar. 1881), pp. 340-357.

would be afforded by private interest in the absence of sufficient competition.³²⁹

Here, Hyndman followed Mill's lead. Like Mill, he isolated the railways – his fifth demand – as a fitting candidate for State management, adding that 'in certain matters management by the State is essential to efficiency.'³³⁰ Even more important, though, there were moral issues to consider: uppermost in Hyndman's mind was less the 'prices of commodities', but ensuring that the organization of combinations redounded to the 'advantage of all'.³³¹

While Hyndman's other demands may not have directly echoed Mill's *Chapters* – namely [vi] the establishment of a department for the main watercourses, canals, and forestry to mitigate environmental destruction; and [vii] an extension of the Factory and Mines Acts, and inspection of shipping – they were at least issued in the same spirit. The grounds for making them were also covered by a clause which Mill inserted. Mill argued:

A proposed reform in laws and customs is not necessarily objectionable because its adoption would imply, not the adaptation of all human affairs to the existing idea of property, but the adaptation of existing ideas of property to the growth and improvement of human affairs. This is said without prejudice to the equitable claim of proprietors to be compensated by the State for such legal rights of a proprietary nature as they may be dispossessed of for the public advantage... [S]ociety is fully entitled to abrogate or alter any particular right of property which on sufficient consideration it judges to stand in the way of the public good.³³²

³²⁹ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 252

³³⁰ Hyndman, *England for All*, p. 102. For a discussion of this issue of the railways and 'state purchase' during the nineteenth century see Barry E. Eldon, *Nationalization in British Politics. The Historical Background* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1965), pp. 78-108.

³³¹ Hyndman, *England for All*, p. 109.

³³² Mill, *Chapters*, p. 279.

In conformity with Mill's strictures, Hyndman proceeded with the same measured resolve in positing his suggestions for land reform, a much less controversial, but decidedly more proposal-laden field of inquiry than capital and labour. Hyndman began by invoking the popular idea of 'merrie England', the idea that the fifteenth century constituted a 'golden age' of agriculture when prosperous, independent peasants peopled the land.³³³ Hyndman stressed, however, that the desire to 'put the clock back 400 years' was indefensible.³³⁴

Following Mill's death in 1873, the Land Tenure Reform Association ran out of steam. It began to peter out shortly after. However, its programmatic successor, Bradlaugh's Land Law Reform League, was still in the vigour of youth when Hyndman began writing *England for All*.³³⁵ At around the same time of the decline of the LTRA, the more ambitious Land and Labour League atrophied too. But its call for nationalization was taken up by Alfred Russel Wallace in 1880. The following year the English Land Nationalization Society was formed under Wallace's guidance. The presence of these organisations, both actual and incipient, form the background to Hyndman's utterances.

Hyndman refused to believe that either free trade in land or compulsory subdivision would achieve any longstanding benefit to agricultural producers or the nation at large. Wallace's scheme, on the other hand, first elaborated in the *Contemporary Review* in November 1880,

³³³ Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment, Reform*, pp. 86-89. Contrary to Bevir's suggestion, Hyndman's nostalgia for the 'golden age' was no different in spirit from the sympathy shown for the same phenomenon by Mill, Fawcett, Thornton, or Cowen. *Making of British Socialism*, p. 67.

³³⁴ Hyndman, *England for All*, p. 27. For a discussion of some of the arguments of its other proponents see Antony Taylor, 'Richard Cobden, J. E. Thorold Rogers, and Henry George', in Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman (eds.), *The Land Question in Britain, 1750-1950* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 146-166.

³³⁵ Before, that is, the parliamentary oath saga effectively deprived it of its leader, inaugurating its own descent. Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, p. 82.

came considerably closer to the mark.³³⁶ Wallace's proposal was the most far-reaching of its kind to have received widespread public attention. Yet it was notably cautious. In the first instance, land would be permitted to legally descend for four generations beyond the existing owner before passing on to the State. And, secondly, it would be distributed among a large number of small cultivators paying ground rent for their plots to the Government directly.³³⁷ Hyndman, by contrast, had a more ambitious plan, involving the maximization of the country's productive resources. However, the 'period', he averred, was a transitional one. Hyndman proposed, therefore, the following four reforms as an intermediary solution: [i] reform of the law of entail and settlement; [ii] compulsory registration of title; [iii] extension of the power of local bodies to acquire land for all purposes and to lease it in small portions; and [iv] compensated expropriation of property-owners in large cities. Notwithstanding their comparative imprecision, and their Millian regard for compensation, even these outstripped Wallace's plan for verve. As Hyndman argued:

No confiscation or revenge for the forced removal of the people from the land is asked for. But the unborn have no rights, and the nation has always both the power and the right to take any land at a fair valuation. By immediate limitation of the right of inheritance, and an application of the power of purchase, the State or the local authority would speedily come into possession of land, which could be used for the common interest, and some comfort and security obtained for those who at present have neither.³³⁸

³³⁶ Alfred Russel Wallace, 'How to Nationalize the Land: A Radical Solution of the Irish Land Problem', *Contemporary Review*, 38 (Nov. 1880), pp. 716-736. Hyndman tried to convert Wallace to his own views. Initially, he failed in that endeavour. But there were members of the Democratic Federation, like Mill's stepdaughter, Helen Taylor, who did have a foot in both camps. Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, pp. 515-516. For a discussion of Helen Taylor's activities see Joseph Persky, *The Political Economy of Progress. John Stuart Mill and Modern Radicalism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 169-171; and Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, pp. 77-78, 105-106.

³³⁷ Wallace, 'How to Nationalize the Land', pp. 721, 722-724.

³³⁸ Hyndman, *England for All*, p. 30.

With the most vexatious subjects – i. e. those topics of an explicitly economic nature – thus dealt with and put to one side in the first three chapters, the remainder of Hyndman's book, the final five chapters, was turned over to questions of political reform, the colonies, and foreign affairs. In the second section of *England for All*, Hyndman therefore moved on from Mill's *Chapters* and adopted his *Representative Government* as a template to work with, and controvert, instead. However, it was not only the 'moral benefits of democratic self-government' that closely paralleled Mill's ruminations on desirable forms of government.³³⁹ Rather, Hyndman's arguments shadowed Mill's thesis in numerous ways, charting meticulously its chapters dedicated to the extension of the suffrage right through to its final portion on the government of dependencies by a Free State. Moreover, although the historiography is almost uniformly silent on this engagement with Mill's ideas, herein lies one of the most important sources of many of the positions for which Hyndman has been condemned as a Conservative or Tory Radical. For example, as we shall see, Hyndman's notional chauvinism, his so-called imperialism, and the ambivalence he displayed over full manhood suffrage, among other items, can all be traced to Mill's book.

To begin with, Hyndman received encouragement from *Representative Government* in formulating his view of the British Empire, and, more particularly, in the role he accorded to the colonies composed, in Mill's words, 'of people of similar civilization to the ruling country'.³⁴⁰ To be sure, the presiding impulse in Hyndman's scheme for imperial federation

³³⁹ Wolfe alone among scholars recognised this connection. *From Radicalism to Socialism*, p. 74.

³⁴⁰ John Stuart Mill, *Representative Government*, p. 447.

was provided by Dilke's *Greater Britain*.³⁴¹ But the reasons that Mill gave for 'maintaining the present slight bond of connexion', as well as the assessment he made of the 'Anglo-Saxon' character also contributed to the rationalization underlying Hyndman's overall plan.

Hyndman, for instance, echoed Mill's contention that the union of Britain and its colonies formed 'a step, as far as it goes, towards universal peace, and friendly co-operation among nations.'³⁴² Unlike Mill, however, Hyndman believed in the efficacy of an equal federation, and his enthusiasm for the retention, and enhancement, of the existing union was consequently of a much more thoroughgoing kind.

Furthermore, the import that Hyndman invested in the English-speaking democracies cohered neatly, too, with the vision set out by Mill. According to Hyndman,

The Anglo-Saxon race, which has shown the world how to reconcile freedom and order with steady progress, can by combination and determined effort secure for themselves and their children the leadership in the social changes and reforms which are close at hand.³⁴³

And, similarly, for Mill, in a much more unpolemical mode:

The striving, go-ahead character of England and the United States is only a fit subject of disapproving criticism, on account of the very secondary objects on which it commonly expends its strength. In itself it is the foundation of the best hopes for the general improvement of mankind.³⁴⁴

Hyndman also echoed Mill's pronouncements (published elsewhere) on non-intervention in foreign affairs, in insisting that a 'great country has

³⁴¹ Most tellingly, though, Mill, 'hitherto a stranger', was also 'captivated' by Dilke's book, 'and for the remaining four years of his life was Dilke's principal mentor.' Roy Jenkins, 'Dilke, Sir Charles Wentworth (1843-1911)', *ODNB*.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 451.

³⁴³ Hyndman, *England for All*, p. 168.

³⁴⁴ Mill, *Representative Government*, p. 252. The fact that Mill may have taken a different view later is, of course, beside the point here. But see Duncan Bell, 'John Stuart Mill on Colonies', *Political Theory*, 38/1 (2010), pp. 34-64.

moral duties' to perform in the same way that an individual person has.³⁴⁵ Yet, these minor forays aside, the bulk of Hyndman's engagement with Mill's *Representative Government* was reserved for his observations on political reform.

As Logie Barrow and Ian Bullock observantly, but not altogether accurately, remarked, in *England for All* 'Hyndman gave the impression of arguing himself into support for universal suffrage through many misgivings.'³⁴⁶ Following Mill's commentary, Hyndman re-posed the 'two-fold danger' inherent in the problem of the extension of the franchise that Mill isolated.³⁴⁷ 'We are now in a vicious circle', Hyndman reiterated, depositing, at the same time, evidence of the ongoing equivocation that Barrow and Bullock underscored: 'Shut men out from voting,' he claimed, 'and a minority unjustly controls the country: give the vote to all, and there is the risk of wholesale corruption, as well as that ignorance should become the ultimate court of appeal.'³⁴⁸ Still, Hyndman departed from Mill in arguing that, be that as it may, 'Manhood suffrage could alone supply the power to carry out genuine reform'.³⁴⁹

While Mill insisted that 'universal teaching must precede universal enfranchisement', Hyndman countered that, under present conditions, the prospect that parliament might legislate for 'free compulsory education to

³⁴⁵ Hyndman, *England for All*, p. 170. John Stuart Mill, 'A Few Words on Non-Intervention', *Fraser's Magazine*, 60/360 (Dec. 1859), pp. 766-776.

³⁴⁶ Logie Barrow and Ian Bullock, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement, 1880-1914* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 13. While it would certainly be foolhardy to take Joseph Lane's utterance on the subject of Hyndman's scepticism at face value, there is probably at least a kernel of truth in the statement quoted by Tsuzuki: 'on the Suffrage Question he made a remark I have never forgotten or forgiven. He asked me if I meant to say that a loafer at the East End of London was to be placed on an equality with myself.' *Hyndman and British Socialism*, p. 30.

³⁴⁷ Mill, *Representative Government*, p. 333.

³⁴⁸ Hyndman, *England for All*, p. 91.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

remedy this ignorance' was wholly illusory.³⁵⁰ In contrast to Mill – and pace Barrow and Bullock – Hyndman did not sanction the latter's disregard for 'the accident of sex', confining his proposed reforms to men only.³⁵¹ Nonetheless, he did reject the concept of plural voting, Mill's panacea for the problem of 'ignorant democracy'. Thus, while the latter maintained that, 'though every one ought to have a voice – that every one should have an equal voice is a totally different proposition', the former insisted that, 'The right of all to a vote once conceded, no man can claim a greater share in representation than another.'³⁵²

In addition to these skirmishes, Hyndman also followed Mill on other issues. For example, in his proposal for a Great Council composed of representatives of the commonwealth and dependencies to replace the House of Lords Hyndman endeavoured to make it cohere with Mill's prescriptions for a second chamber by insisting that to 'sweep away any institution altogether' is 'scarcely our English way'.³⁵³ Likewise, following Mill's argument that, 'the chief magistrate in a republic should be appointed avowedly... by the representative body', Hyndman averred that, 'a reformed House of Commons should exercise far more direct control, delegating its authority... to a great officer of State and his department.'³⁵⁴ At the same time, however, Hyndman echoed Mill in arguing that 'greater powers should be given to local assemblies to deal with many matters which now come before the House of Commons'; both men considered the 'enormous amount of private business which takes up the time of Parliament, and the thoughts of its individual members, distracting them from the proper

³⁵⁰ Mill, *Representative Government*, p. 330. Hyndman, *England for All*, p. 91. Here, Hyndman clearly meant something weightier than the legislation on education enacted between 1870 and 1880.

³⁵¹ Mill, *Representative Government*, p. 345.

³⁵² Hyndman, *England for All*, p. 92.

³⁵³ Mill, *Representative Government*, p. 399. Hyndman, *England for All*, p. 96.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102. Mill, *Representative Government*, p. 411.

occupations of the great council of the nation... as a serious evil'.³⁵⁵ As Wolfe acknowledged, Hyndman and Mill were agreed that local administrative institutions were the best instruments for procuring what Mill termed 'the public education of the citizens'.³⁵⁶ Thus, Hyndman wrote that, a 'wide scheme of decentralisation, carried out with a view to interesting the whole population in their local business' would 'give the working classes that impetus towards social improvement by their own energy which is so manifestly necessary'.³⁵⁷ Furthermore, it would have the additional merit of serving, as Mill suggested, 'to strengthen the House of Commons for dealing with affairs now pushed aside by less important matters to the injury of the whole community'.³⁵⁸

These utterances put paid, then – in a theoretical sense at least – to the charge that Hyndman's attitude to social reform was at bottom paternalistic.³⁵⁹ In similar fashion, Hyndman's clear-cut intellectual obligation to Mill, and his proximity to Toynbee and Green, should also put an end to the reputation he has acquired for espousing a form of Tory Radicalism. The programme of social reform that Hyndman outlined in *England for All* was, to deploy an anachronistic term, a version of Municipal Socialism, more ambitious in the long-term than Chamberlain's Birmingham experiment, but, in conformity with his Millian principles,

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 412.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Hyndman, *England for All*, pp. 100, 100-101.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 100.

³⁵⁹ Crick, *History of the Social Democratic Federation*, p. 33. Hyndman might, at times, have *behaved* otherwise, as Bax's recollections of his intolerance towards intemperance among working men perhaps shows. But Bax was equally dismissive of the companion charge that Hyndman was an ex-Conservative. *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, pp. 98-99, 94-95.

minus the regimentation associated with Fabian municipal schemes.³⁶⁰ Moreover, besides the light it sheds on Hyndman's liberal intellectual genealogy, his preoccupation with *Representative Government* was revealing in another sense. Obviously, Hyndman did not envisage either a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat or the withering away of the State. Rather, in his relatively detailed exposition of organisation, Hyndman anticipated the improvement of the representative State instead.

Before long, Hyndman, to be sure, moved on to the obstetric view of political practice promoted by Marx and Engels – the view, that is, that the task of Socialists 'is *not to design* solutions to social problems *but rather to facilitate the delivery* of the solution which is already being produced by historical development' – thus negating the need for scrupulously detailed proposals for political reform.³⁶¹ Over time, he ceased, too, to appeal to considerations of justice.³⁶² But in *England for All* Hyndman argued that, 'the working of capital is essentially immoral', putting him therefore closer to Mill than Marx, who professed to tie every principle of justice to a specific mode of production.³⁶³ Although he now believed that the working

³⁶⁰ Wolfe, for example, noted the 'sharply authoritarian turn' taken by Sidney Webb from 1888 onwards. *From Radicalism to Socialism*, pp. 281-282. Hyndman consistently complained, furthermore, that the 'function of the Fabian Society has been to prepare politicians and their supporters for... an irresponsible, tyrannical, and half-educated bureaucracy... without any mandate from the constituencies or any reference to the mass of the voters'. *Further Reminiscences*, pp. 211-212. For further objections to 'a social state regimented and tyrannised over by a body of bureaucratic functionaries' aimed at the Fabians see H. M. Hyndman, *An Introduction to the Life to Come* (London, 1926), p. 18. For Chamberlain's Birmingham see Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London, Penguin, 1968), Ch. 5; and Tristram Hunt, *Building Jerusalem. Rise and Fall of the Victorian City* (London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), Ch. 8.

³⁶¹ David Leopold, 'Socialism and (the rejection of) utopia', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 12/3 (2007), pp. 232-233. See also G. A. Cohen. See *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?* (Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 2001), Ch. 4.

³⁶² Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, p. 254.

³⁶³ For a useful discussion see Norman Geras, 'The Controversy about Marx and Justice', *New Left Review*, 150/1 (1985), pp. 47-85. Geras rightly concluded that part of the problem in ascertaining just whether Marx condemned capitalism as

classes should rely on themselves alone, for Hyndman, the refusal of the upper classes to instigate social reform was still a moral failure. Consequently, like Mill and Mazzini, but decidedly unlike Marx, he sought to compensate for that dereliction with a plea for ‘some higher ideal of patriotism’.³⁶⁴

Be that as it may, as Marx’s own remarks on the matter indicate, Hyndman’s overall reconstruction of the principal arguments outlined in *Capital* was generally error-free. The chapters on labour and capital were indeed ‘only literal extracts from, or circumlocutions of,’ Marx’s book. In short, Hyndman’s understanding of Marx’s economic principles as expounded in *England for All* was on the mark. The same, however, cannot be said of Bax’s exegesis of *Capital*, published in *Modern Thought* six months later. Without doubt, Hyndman was far less forthcoming than Bax in endorsing modern Socialism. But of the two pupils Hyndman’s grasp of Marx’s ideas, as we shall see in the next chapter, was unquestionably stronger.

unjust is that ‘Marx has it both ways’. That is to say, ‘Marx did think capitalism unjust but he did not think he thought so.’ Ibid., pp. 63, 70.

³⁶⁴ Hyndman, *England for All*, p. 78. For a précis of Mill’s patriotism see Varouxakis, ‘Patriotism’, ‘Cosmopolitanism’ and ‘Humanity’ in Victorian Political Thought’, pp. 101-103.

4

A Real Enthusiasm for the New Ideas

In his letter to Sorge Marx praised the article that Bax had written for the journal *Modern Thought*, in which Bax outlined Marx's central economic ideas. Yet, as we heard in Chapter 1, Marx also acknowledged that Bax's article was not flawless. Firstly, the 'biographical notices' that Bax recorded were 'mostly wrong', Marx wrote; and, second, 'In the exposition of my economic principles and in his translations (i.e., quotations of the *Capital*)', he continued, much was also 'wrong and confused'.³⁶⁵ Perhaps the most important aspect of that distorted exposition, however, was Bax's reconstruction of Marx's notion of surplus value. For, unlike Hyndman, Bax presented a garbled account of that pivotal concept, failing to make the distinction adequately between labour and labour power. Clearly, then, what Marx admired most about Bax's article was, above all, its spirit. According to Marx, it was not only 'pervaded by a real enthusiasm for the new ideas themselves', but it also stood up 'against Brit. Philistinism' in a way that Hyndman nominally failed to.

In contrast to Hyndman, Bax imposed no constraints on the ambit of his utterances. Established in 1879 under the editorship of the Fabian-to-be J. C. Foulger, *Modern Thought* was an avant-garde journal.³⁶⁶ Thus, at variance with Hyndman, Bax was neither speaking to the governing classes, nor to a popular Radical audience. He therefore made no concessions to established conventions or native traditions of belief. Instead, Bax struck a

³⁶⁵ Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 46, p. 163.

³⁶⁶ Race Mathews, *Australia's First Fabians. Middle Class Radicals, Labour Activists and the Labour Movement* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 84; Pierson, *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism*, p. 107.

far more insurgent note. Hence, he showed no reservations about describing Marx as ‘the greatest living exponent of the economical theory of Modern Socialism’, nor in suggesting, in what was probably a jibe at Hyndman, that,

Socialism has little in common with that form of Radicalism so much favoured in England, which consists in the promotion of “reforms by constitutional means,” in vague spouting about progress, and general expressions of an amiable disposition of mind.³⁶⁷

In political terms, far from constituting a virtue – pace Marx – Bax’s intransigence would prove rather to be a significant weakness. This forms the theme of Chapter 10. But Bax’s indifference to strategies of legitimisation bore testament to the cosmic optimism that permeated his earliest writings, all of which were also published in *Modern Thought* between 1879 and 1881. This chapter recovers the ideas set out in those articles.

Marx’s appraisal of Bax’s article was positive. But Bax’s assessment of *Capital*, the consummation, he judged, of all of Marx’s previous work, was even more flattering.³⁶⁸ As we shall see here, however, between 1879 and 1882, Marx’s critical analysis of capitalist production had to contend for space in Bax’s work with a conception, first, of Socialism based on the political ideas of Auguste Comte, and a social evolutionary theory, second,

³⁶⁷ Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘Leaders of Modern Thought – XXXIII: Karl Marx’, *Modern Thought*, 3/12 (Dec. 1881), pp. 349, 353. The operative section of that sentence, insofar as Hyndman can be suspected to be its specific target, being ‘an amiable disposition of mind’. Bax and Hyndman did not meet until 1882. But it is highly unlikely that the former had not already familiarised himself with the latter’s work. In his autobiography, Bax, moreover, remarked upon the ‘perennial buoyancy of temperament’ that marked Hyndman’s personality. *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 96.

³⁶⁸ ‘His other writings may be regarded in the main as introductions to, or special applications of *Das Kapital*’, Bax wrote. ‘Among the most important of these’, he continued, ‘may be mentioned *Die Heilige Familie... Misere de la philosophie, reponse a la philosophie de la misere, par M. Proudhon... Manifesto of the Communist Party... The 18th Brumaire*; and most important of all... *Zur Kritik der Politischen Economie*.’ Bax, ‘Karl Marx’, p. 349.

derived from Herbert Spencer. The article on Marx marked the beginning of an intellectual transition for Bax. This chapter pursues how that played out. It charts how Bax's Comtian Socialism was subsumed by an idea of Socialism based on an amalgam of Spencer and Marx instead. But before taking that trajectory on it is worth isolating here three claims that Bax issued in an otherwise largely unremarkable précis of Marx's life and thought.

The first of these claims was the 'great discovery' that Bax attributed to Marx, namely his discovery of 'the real source and processes of industrial production'.³⁶⁹ The second was Bax's choice of analogy: 'The Kapital', he wrote, 'embodies the working out of a doctrine in economy, comparable in its revolutionary character and wide-reaching importance to the Copernican system in Astronomy, or the law of gravitation in Mechanics generally.'³⁷⁰ Needless to say, what makes these claims noteworthy is not their intrinsic merit – i.e. an understanding of Marx notable for its subtlety – but rather the evident absence of Engels's mediation in their construction.³⁷¹

Marx's main achievement had not yet been fixed as the discovery of the 'law of development of human history'. Nor had the alleged parallel with Darwin's discovery of 'the law of development of organic nature' been set in place.³⁷² In the absence of Engels's mature gloss, Bax, like Hyndman, had

³⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 350.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ That said, the 'great discovery' that Bax attributed to the German thinker was in fact close to 'Marx's brief', as Paul Thomas put it, namely 'the critique of political economy'. 'Engels and "Scientific Socialism"', p. 222. See also Gareth Stedman Jones' remarks in 'Marx's *Critique of Political Economy*', pp. 148-149. 'If there is a constant thread in what Marx declared to be his aim,' he argued, 'it is contained in this phrase.' Ibid., p. 149.

³⁷² Frederick Engels, 'Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx' in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works in Two Volumes. Volume II* (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1949), p. 153.

scope to interpret freely. Yet, unlike Hyndman, Bax drew revolutionary conclusions from his encounter with Marx's work.

Bax's revolutionary reading of Marx forms the third notable aspect of the article. Counter to 'that excellent body of persons, the followers of M. Auguste Comte', to moralise capital, he claimed, was on a par with 'the moralisation of brigandage.'³⁷³ It was futile to attempt to ameliorate 'the evils of capitalism'.³⁷⁴ As Bax pointed out in a previous article, what was needed was a total overhaul instead, a 'form of social reconstruction... inaugurated on a higher and more enduring basis.'³⁷⁵ Writing just days before Hyndman distributed *England for All* at the inaugural conference of the Democratic Federation, Bax argued that,

This basis it is vain to expect will be founded on the compromises which modern Liberalism affects, and which consist, for the most part, in attempting, to use the old metaphor, to put new wine in old bottles, or, in other words, to infuse the spirit of the new order into the forms of the old.³⁷⁶

In contrast to Hyndman and Mill, Bax was not opposed to a revolutionary transition to Socialism. Nor, in opposition to Cunningham and Kaufmann, did he refrain from anticipating the realisation of 'a millennium'.³⁷⁷ Rather, alone among the contributors to the discussion of Socialism in the periodical press between 1878 and 1881, Bax conformed to the revolutionary pole of Mill's Socialist dichotomy. Indeed, in many ways, as we shall see in further detail in Chapters 10 and 11, he was a perfect example of the Socialist in possession of the 'serene confidence in their own wisdom on the one hand and a recklessness of other people's sufferings on the other' that Mill held up as the ideal-typical representative of

³⁷³ Bax, 'Karl Marx', p. 354.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ernest Belfort Bax, 'The Ideal of the Future (Part Two)', *Modern Thought*, 3/6 (Jun. 1881), p. 142.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Cunningham, 'Progress of Socialism', p. 254.

revolutionary Socialism.³⁷⁸ For Bax, revolution was an unfortunate, but necessary prelude to the society of the future:

That the revolution through which we are now passing will be closed by a purely peaceful process and without a convulsion of some kind, is to me scarcely credible. The opposing forces appear far too strong and uncompromising to admit of any well supposition. International warfare must, we are afraid, be succeeded by international revolution before the reign of force shall be finally ended.³⁷⁹

In adopting that standpoint, it helped no doubt that Bax belonged to a different generation and social milieu to Hyndman and other public moralists. Born in 1854 to a lower-middle class nonconformist family, Bax inhabited a comparatively disadvantaged social space. There was no public school and university education, for example, no membership of a Pall Mall gentleman's club, nor, in consequence, did Bax enjoy that sense of intimacy with the practical concerns of the Victorian governing class shared by men like Hyndman.³⁸⁰ It was therefore much easier for Bax to take a more extreme stance, and his cultural preferences matched his iconoclastic political disposition.

In philosophy, Bax championed Arthur Schopenhauer, and in the arts, he admired Richard Wagner. Bax wrote about them both for *Modern Thought* in the same series of articles as his subsequent submission on Marx.³⁸¹ Bax's main intellectual commitments, however, resided elsewhere. Before adopting Idealism once and for all as a starting-point in metaphysics

³⁷⁸ Mill, *Chapters*, pp. 260-261.

³⁷⁹ Bax, 'Ideal of the Future (Part Two)', p. 143.

³⁸⁰ Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 57. Bax belonged to the 'intelligent self-educated middle class' group of men and women who he described in his autobiography as the active participants in 'the Dialectical Society, a London Debating Club founded in the sixties for independent discussion of all questions'. *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 228. Of course, self-educated only in the contemporary sense that he not been to a public school or Oxbridge. For a short discussion of this point see Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 29.

³⁸¹ Ernest Belfort Bax, 'Leaders of Modern Thought – XVI: Arthur Schopenhauer', *Modern Thought*, 2/10 (Oct. 1880), pp. 487-492. Ernest Belfort Bax, 'Leaders of Modern Thought – XX: Richard Wagner', *Modern Thought*, 3/9 (Sep. 1881), pp. 243-249.

in 1882, Bax had been ‘captivated’, first, by Spencer, and his ‘thoroughgoing empiricism’ had ‘suffered a shock’ after a reading of Kant.³⁸²

Bax’s early political connections, on the other hand, centred on the ‘Positivist body’, whose meetings he had begun to attend following the overthrow of the Paris Commune in 1871 – a formative experience in his ‘mental career’.³⁸³ On 18 March 1879, Bax attended the last annual dinner held in celebration of the Commune in London.³⁸⁴ And there, he met Hermann Jung, a French Swiss watchmaker residing in the metropolis. A former member of the First International, and an erstwhile disciple of Marx, Jung facilitated Bax’s entrance, both intellectually and organisationally, to the incipient Socialist movement. Jung introduced Bax to other revolutionary exiles like Johannes Most and Prince Kropotkin, who in turn introduced Bax to Hyndman.³⁸⁵

Shortly after his introduction to Jung, Bax wrote his first article on modern Socialism in *Modern Thought* in August 1879. Not surprisingly, then, given his political background, the article bore the impress of Comte. Moreover, Holyoake had not been without some justification in making the connection between the Comtists and State Socialism in his article in the *Nineteenth Century*. Of course, neither Comte nor his British disciples were Socialists. But, even more than Mill, they were given nonetheless to treat ‘Communism’ (a vague term, connoting in this context the various schemes of the former Saint Simonians, the contemporary Fourierists, Louis Blanc,

³⁸² Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘The Analysis of Reality’, in J. H. Muirhead (ed.), *Contemporary British Philosophy* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1924), p. 57.

³⁸³ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, pp. 30, 28.

³⁸⁴ John Cowley, *The Victorian Encounter with Marx. A Study of Ernest Belfort Bax* (London, British Academic Press, 1992), p. 18.

³⁸⁵ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, pp. 39-42. Cowley, *The Victorian Encounter with Marx*, p. 26.

Etienne Cabet, and Proudhon in France, as well as the Owenites in England) with ‘indulgence’.³⁸⁶ To be sure, insofar as they sought to eliminate the division between directors and workers, Communists cleaved to a false view of the modern industrial system. But Comte and his disciples accorded value to the dissension of Communists from orthodox political economy, their appreciation of the social nature of property, and the ‘generous sympathies’ by which they were inspired.³⁸⁷

On Jung’s prompting, Bax first read *Capital* (in the original German) in the middle of 1879.³⁸⁸ However, Bax’s grasp of its argument was even less satisfactory then than it had been in 1881, and he showed no particular preference for Marx over other Socialists in the article. For example, Proudhon, Hartmann, Friedrich Albert Lange, and Eugen Dühring, the titular adversary of Engels’s groundbreaking book published the previous year, were all cited approvingly. Bax may have invoked Marx in a cack-handed reconstruction of his explanation of the origin of profit in its opening passage, but Royden Harrison was close to the mark in suggesting that this was ‘Socialism as seen through the eyes of a well-disposed Positivist’.³⁸⁹

Bax was not, however, a Positivist. Even in 1879, he contravened Comte’s metaphysics, deviating from his empiricist epistemology on the one hand, and from his deterministic ontology on the other. In his first article for *Modern Thought*, for example, Bax posited a theory of knowledge based partly on Kant, and he repudiated Comte’s contention that human beings

³⁸⁶ Auguste Comte, *A General View of Positivism*, trans. J. H. Bridges (London, George Routledge & Sons Limited, 1848), p. 178. Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte. An Intellectual Biography. Volume 2* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 273.

³⁸⁷ Comte, *General View of Positivism*, pp. 176, 172, 171, 168. Pickering, *Auguste Comte*, pp. 276-277.

³⁸⁸ Cowley, *The Victorian Encounter with Marx*, p. 20.

³⁸⁹ Harrison, *Before the Socialists*, p. 337.

‘are powerless to create’, that is, the idea that ‘all we can do in bettering our condition is to modify an order in which we can produce no radical change.’³⁹⁰ The article was entitled ‘The Word “Religion”’. In it Bax sought, like Comte, to rehabilitate religion by expunging it of its theistic content, giving it a modern, secular guise instead. Yet, as we shall see, the symmetry between the idea of the religion of the future that Bax set out and Comte’s Religion of Humanity was more apparent than real.

Bax’s religion of Humanity was not inspired by Comte.³⁹¹ Nonetheless, Bax’s description of Socialism was inflected by Comtian theory. In his article on modern Socialism, Bax compared Positivism and Socialism as parallel attempts ‘to render progress systematic.’³⁹² He also issued three Comtian proposals: firstly, inspired by Comte’s notion of a ‘spiritual power’, Bax envisaged a Socialist society split into ‘two main divisions’, namely into a ‘working class proper... and a *classe d’intelligence*’, each performing distinct social functions; second, following Comte’s transitional policy, Bax posited the possibility of some kind of political dictatorship; and finally, Bax’s description of the political basis of modern Socialism also plainly had its origin in Comte: ‘The political goal of Socialism’, he wrote,

³⁹⁰ Comte, *General View of Positivism*, p. 30. ‘It should be observed’, Bax argued, ‘that the life of humanity need not be bounded by the existence of this planet; it is perfectly conceivable that man should gain a degree of power over the conditions of his environment – over the external world – sufficient to overcome forces now insuperable, and to modify conditions now inflexible.’ Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘The Word “Religion”’, *Modern Thought*, 1/4 (May. 1879), p. 69. Comte, by contrast, suggested the opposite: ‘The only phenomena, indeed, which we are wholly unable to modify are the simplest of all, the phenomena of the solar system which we inhabit.’ *General View of Positivism*, p. 31.

³⁹¹ Stanley Pierson, for example, suggested that ‘the Comtian vision of a new religion, centering on the ideal of humanity, influenced Bax’s efforts to construct a Socialist philosophy of life.’ ‘Ernest Belfort Bax: 1854-1926 The Encounter of Marxism and Late Victorian Culture’, *Journal of British Studies*, 12/1 (1972), pp. 40-41.

³⁹² Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘Modern Socialism’, *Modern Thought*, 1/7 (Aug. 1879), p. 151.

is the destruction of the current national boundaries... and the reconstruction of Europe as a Federal Republic, of which the larger cities would constitute the units, and which would unite the greatest possible local autonomy with solidarity as based on the authority of a central power, consisting of a bureau, or Federal Council, sitting probably at Paris.³⁹³

For the rest, Bax disregarded Comte, and the objections to Communism he enunciated. The same was true of his conduct towards other receptive critics.

It would be fair to say that Bax was aware of, but not part of, the discussion of Socialism that began the previous year in the *Contemporary*, *Fortnightly* and *Nineteenth Century* journals.³⁹⁴ In his own article on the same topic, for example, Bax registered his approval of Cunningham's contribution. He also remarked that Mill's 'more than partial adhesion to Socialism' in his 'last published writings' was a 'noteworthy fact'.³⁹⁵ However, Bax deviated from the arguments set out by both authors. As his comments on each of them suggest, Bax had a greater affinity with Cunningham's projection than he did with Mill's more inhibited account: of the former, he wrote that the 'general tendency of economic matters in a Socialist direction has been... ably pointed out'; Mill, meanwhile, merited mention only for the fact of conversion.³⁹⁶

Still, Bax demurred at Cunningham's application of the principle of natural selection. Although Cunningham used Darwin's theory idiosyncratically, taking the society rather than the individual as the unit of adaptation, Bax insisted that it was 'no less unphilosophical than immoral'

³⁹³ Ibid., pp. 151-152.

³⁹⁴ Bax's article elicited a rejoinder in *Modern Thought* from JAS Ball, to which, shortly after, he issued a reply of his own. JAS Ball, "Modern Socialism" Criticised', *Modern Thought*, 1/8 (Sep. 1879), pp. 174-176. Ernest Belfort Bax, 'Reply to Criticism on "Modern Socialism"', *Modern Thought*, 1/9 (Oct. 1879), pp. 195-197.

³⁹⁵ Bax, 'Modern Socialism', p. 153.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

to 'attempt to carry Darwinism into the social sphere'.³⁹⁷ 'Darwinism is true in the natural, viz., pre-Human order of things,' he wrote,

and so long as human progress is unsystematic, viz., unguided by reason, it obtains there also. But the true aim of human progress is to follow the human ideal, and not external nature. Nature is the lower, humanity the higher. The need of systematic progress is becoming more and more felt; the previous unsystematic or natural progress being seen no longer to answer to human needs.³⁹⁸

Bax adhered to a slightly revamped Spencerian interpretation of evolutionary theory. It dispensed with the mechanism of natural selection in favour of a Lamarckian hypothesis compatible with the notion of progress.³⁹⁹ However, that notwithstanding, Bax and Cunningham were at least broadly in agreement.⁴⁰⁰ Bax and Mill, on the other hand, were divided by a notable gulf.

Bax was familiar with Mill's *Chapters*. But Bax made no effort to engage with the constructive criticism that Mill levelled against revolutionary Socialist schemes. Instead, as with his approach to Comte's objections, Bax sidestepped Mill's censorious remarks. He did not acknowledge Mill's attempt to set aright the nominally 'one-sided notion of competition' that 'Socialists generally' were purported to entertain. Nor did he endeavour to refute the ostensible 'disadvantages' that Mill held to be

³⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 151.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ For the various uses to which the notion of evolution was put among late-nineteenth century British Socialists see Stack, 'The First Darwinian Left', pp. 682-710. For Spencer see Robert J. Richards, 'The Relation of Spencer's Evolutionary Theory to Darwin's' in Greta Jones and Robert A. Peel (eds.), *Herbert Spencer. The Intellectual Legacy* (London, Chameleon Press, 2004), pp. 17-36; and J. D. Y. Peel, *Herbert Spencer. The Evolution of a Sociologist* (New York, Basic Books, 1971), Ch. 6. For its wider history see John Burrow, *Evolution and Society. A Study in Victorian Social Theory* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1966); and Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution. The History of an Idea* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989). Unlike Edward Carpenter and George Bernard Shaw, Bax was not, though, a Lamarckian. See Livesey, *Socialism, Sex, and the Culture of Aestheticism*, Ch. 4; and Piers J. Hale, 'The Search for Purpose in a Post-Darwinian Universe: George Bernard Shaw, 'Creative Evolution', and Shavian Eugenics: 'The Dark Side of the Force', *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, 28/2 (2006), pp. 191-213.

⁴⁰⁰ Despite, that is, the absence of a causal relationship between the former and the latter's work.

‘inherent to’ Communist systems – the supposed ‘sacrifice of the economic advantages of the division of employments’; the ‘attempts to obtain exemptions by favour or fraud’; the ‘rivalry for reputation and for personal power’; and ‘the compression of individuality’.⁴⁰¹ Rather, Bax persevered irrespectively. He outlined a vision of Socialism in which ‘no wealth could exist *as capital* apart from the State’.⁴⁰²

In a passage that betrayed both his misapprehension of Marx and his defiance of Mill, Bax asserted that,

By the Socialist State in its administration of industry, having no profit to deduct, but having solely public benefit in view; on the one hand, adequate remuneration would be ensured to the artificer, and on the other hand, the consumer would receive the commodity at the precise cost of production and not *plus* two or three layers of profit as at present.⁴⁰³

Simply stated, Bax’s sanguine vision of the future remained undimmed by the problems that Mill anticipated. In the light, however, of the teleological forecast of ‘a collective consciousness’ that he posited elsewhere, Bax had good reason not to pay too much attention to such apparent trifles. The same was true of his failure here to assimilate Marx’s theory of surplus value – his ascription, that is, of the realisation of profit to the ‘increment over and above the cost of production’, rather than to the process of

⁴⁰¹ Mill, *Chapters*, pp. 251, 268, 269, 270. On the second point Mill wrote that, ‘plans for the regeneration of society must consider average human beings, and not only them but the large residuum of persons greatly below the average in the personal and social virtues’. ‘When selfish ambition is excluded from the field in which, with most men, it chiefly exercises itself, that of riches and pecuniary interest,’ Mill argued in elaboration of the third, ‘it would betake itself with greater intensity to the domain still open to it, and we may expect that the struggles for pre-eminence and for influence in management would be of great bitterness when the personal passions, diverted from their ordinary channel, are driven to seek their principal gratification in that other direction.’ Ibid. pp. 268-269.

⁴⁰² Bax, ‘Modern Socialism’, p. 151.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

capitalist production itself.⁴⁰⁴ All such attention to detail amounted to only so much pettifogging.

However, when it came to the ‘question of the manner in which the re-organized State should obtain possession of the requisites for production’, Bax found it convenient to lean on Mill. He argued that, as ‘regards the land, it is admitted even by political economists to exist as private property only by a so-called prescriptive right’.⁴⁰⁵ To be sure, Bax was much less obliging than Mill on the question of compensation: ‘so far from its resumption by the people entitling private “owners” to any compensation,’ he wrote, ‘it is the latter who in strict justice ought to compensate the former for having been allowed to hold it as a source of profit for so long.’⁴⁰⁶ Nonetheless, Bax conceded that non-landed property was a different matter: ‘Although it may be alleged that as much of the private wealth of the community has been wrongly as rightly acquired under the present system,’ he averred, ‘it would be obviously an absurdity to attempt to institute any general distinction; therefore,’ Bax continued,

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid. Marx articulated his position in the pithiest of terms before the General Council of the IWMA in 1865. The document was later published as *Value, Price and Profit* in 1898. ‘The value of a commodity is determined by the *total quantity of labour* contained in it. But part of that quantity of labour is realized in a value for which and equivalent has been paid in the form of wages; part of it is realized in a value for which NO equivalent has been paid. Part of the labour contained in the commodity is *paid* labour; part is *unpaid* labour. By selling, therefore, the commodity *at its value*, that is, as the crystallization of the *total quantity of labour* bestowed upon it, the capitalist must necessarily sell it at a profit. He sells not only what has cost him an equivalent, but he sells also what has cost him nothing, although it has cost his workman labour. The cost of the commodity to the capitalist and its real cost are different things.

I repeat, therefore, that normal and average profits are made by selling commodities not *above*, but *at their real values*.’ *Value, Price and Profit* (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1947), pp. 38-39.

⁴⁰⁵ Bax, ‘Modern Socialism’, p. 152. Bax, ‘Reply to Criticism on “Modern Socialism”’, p. 195.

⁴⁰⁶ Bax, ‘Modern Socialism’, p. 152.

‘all property not landed or immediately derived from land must be considered as carrying with it a right of ownership’.⁴⁰⁷

On this issue at least, Bax’s position in 1879 was conciliatory. Indeed, Bax even presented an alternative mode of transition to ‘the temporary concentration of power in the hands of a dictatorship’. It too, like Cunningham’s, was gradualist in ethos.⁴⁰⁸ He proposed, for example, firstly, ‘the passing of a law of *maximum* and *minimum*... ensuring to the workman his adequate remuneration, and... fixing the price, at least, of all necessities’; and second, Bax proposed ‘the reduction of the existing system of rates and taxes to one progressive income-tax on an ascending scale’.⁴⁰⁹ Still, Bax’s overall conception of Socialism remained Elysian. Its ‘three bases’, he wrote,

may be said to be in Industry the direction of a democratic State to take the place of private capitalists; in Politics a universal Federal Republic to take the place of the present Nationalist system; in Religion a human ideal to take the place of theological cults.⁴¹⁰

In contrast to Cunningham, then, Bax offered a cosmopolitan notion of Socialism which had nothing to do with shoring up Britain’s place in a rapidly changing international economic and military order.⁴¹¹ Similarly, in contrast to Mill, Bax’s conception of a Socialist economy did not involve the retention of the market; and it certainly had nothing to do with shoring up Britain’s ailing domestic order. Rather, the ‘human ideal’ contained the key to Bax’s notion of Socialism. For example, in a statement unlikely to curry favour with Marx, Bax averred that,

Whatever prejudice may exist amongst many of the Socialist party against the word religion (owing to its lingering theological associations), Socialism is not opposed to religion, if the word be

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., p. 153.

⁴¹¹ Cunningham, ‘Progress of Socialism’, p. 260.

meant to cover a purely human ideal; it indeed essentially implies such an ideal as its foundation.⁴¹²

‘This ideal’, he insisted, ‘animated... the greatest practical Socialist movement the world has yet seen – the Paris Commune’.⁴¹³

Bax’s article on modern Socialism and his next, more oblique, contribution to the same topic in *Modern Thought* were separated by an interval of twenty two months. Bax spent the best part of the intervening period in Berlin. He worked in Berlin for the *Standard* newspaper as assistant correspondent to the comparative philologist, Carl Abel.⁴¹⁴ Bax did not meet any German Socialists during his sojourn in the capital of the newly-founded German Empire.⁴¹⁵ He did, though, befriend Eduard von Hartmann, the author of the immensely successful book, *The Philosophy of the Unconscious*.⁴¹⁶ As with Schopenhauer, Bax rejected the pessimism that suffused Hartmann’s philosophy. But, as we shall see in Chapter 9, Hartmann’s effect on Bax was long-lasting. However, in the two-part article that Bax wrote for *Modern Thought* on his return from Berlin in 1881, it was, above all, to Spencer, ‘the great English philosopher of the seventies and eighties’ to whom Bax turned for inspiration.⁴¹⁷

The first part of ‘The Ideal of the Future’ was published in April.

What Bax sought to achieve in the first instalment was the reconciliation of

⁴¹² Marx paid far less attention to religion than Engels. Engels, as we shall see in Chapter 8, was also decidedly hostile to the suggestion of retaining its language. See Michael Lowy, ‘Friedrich Engels on Religion and Class Struggle’, *Science & Society*, 62/1 (1998), pp. 79-87.

⁴¹³ Bax, ‘Modern Socialism’, p. 153.

⁴¹⁴ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 34.

⁴¹⁵ *How I Became a Socialist*, p. 12.

⁴¹⁶ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, pp. 35-36. For an exposition of Hartmann’s thought see Sebastian Gardner, ‘Eduard von Hartmann’s Philosophy of the Unconscious’, in Angus Nicholls and Martin Liebscher (eds.), *Thinking the Unconscious. Nineteenth-Century German Thought* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 173-199.

⁴¹⁷ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 277.

Religion and Science that Spencer had attempted in *First Principles*. The second part of the article was published in June. In that section Bax posited a critique and a rehabilitation of utilitarian morality galvanized, similarly, by Spencer's appraisal of the 'expediency philosophy' in *Social Statics*. Taking as a starting-point Spencer's assertion that, 'there can never cease to be a place for something of the nature of Religion', Bax insisted that the 'discovery and formulation' of a 'true and objective human ideal' was 'the great and all-important speculative problem of the age'.⁴¹⁸ His main intention in 'The Ideal of the Future' was thus to explicate the 'human ideal'. The following sections reconstruct how Bax accomplished those three tasks.

To begin with, Bax argued that, taken alone, materialism and idealism were unsatisfactory bases for a convincing philosophy of knowledge and being. Dualism offered no alternative either. Rather, 'mind-matter and subject-object are inseparable correlative terms', he wrote, the one essentially implying the other.⁴¹⁹ Following Spencer's analysis in *First Principles*, Bax posited that, 'while conscious-experience is conditioned, there is an unconditioned element in the mind. This notion of unconditionedness,' he continued, 'though it can never become an object of thought, is nevertheless a permanent factor in consciousness.'⁴²⁰ Hence, 'the primal error of theism', on this view, entailed 'separating the conditioned from the unconditioned, and thus erecting a dualism', or, in other words, 'in conceiving the Absolute

⁴¹⁸ Herbert Spencer, *First Principles. A System of Synthetic Philosophy. Vol. I* (London, William & Norgate, 1904), p. 12. Ernest Belfort Bax, 'The Ideal of the Future (Part One)', *Modern Thought*, 3/4 (Apr. 1881), p. 90.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

as *transcendent* rather than as *immanent*’.⁴²¹ Empiricism and materialism, on the other hand, were guilty of the opposite fallacy, that is, the fallacy of denying the legitimacy of the idea of the unconditioned ‘as the essential basis of the conscious or phenomenal world.’⁴²² Theism, then, according to Bax, ‘could defend itself against the assaults of a scepticism’ which ignored that elementary fact, ‘despite its weakness otherwise.’^{423, 424} Bax believed, in accordance with Spencer, ‘that religions, even though no one of them be actually true, are yet all adumbrations of a truth’, namely ‘that the Power which the Universe manifests to us is inscrutable.’⁴²⁵ He did not treat religion instrumentally.

For Bax, as for Spencer, the prospect of ‘our knowledge ever extending beyond the phenomenal’ was impossible.⁴²⁶ For the noumenal order, ‘as that of which the phenomenal order is the expression’, was essentially unknowable.⁴²⁷ The Absolute revealed itself ‘only as manifested in the Relative’.⁴²⁸ Bax and Spencer were at one in the view that, as science advanced, ‘every addition to its surface does but bring it into wider contact with surrounding nescience.’⁴²⁹ ‘The explanation of that which is explicable,’ Spencer wrote, ‘does but bring into greater clearness the

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid., p. 93.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ For Comte, for example, the project of creating a secular religion of humanity went hand in hand with, and was subordinate to, the process that Keith Michael Baker called ‘closing the French Revolution’. See ‘Closing the French Revolution: Saint-Simon and Comte’ in Francois Furet and Mona Azouf (eds.), *The Transformation of Political Culture, 1789-1848* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 323-339. Inspired in part by Comte, Mill similarly posited a series of encouraging remarks about promoting a ‘feeling of unity’ in society by teaching it as a religion. *Utilitarianism* in Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, p. 166.

⁴²⁵ Spencer, *First Principles*, p. 34.

⁴²⁶ Bax, ‘Ideal of the Future (Part One)’, p. 93.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Spencer, *First Principles*, p. 12.

inexplicableness of that which remains behind.’⁴³⁰ In any case, as Bax added, mere sense perception was an unreliable guide to the world:

The fallacy of looking at the objective side of existence alone blinds us to the all-important truth that the conscious is not a constant but a variable quantity... The cognition of *qualities* in the object-world is consequent on *differentiation of faculty* in the subject-world. Our actual objective sense faculties (the five senses) afford us five different sets of perceptions or qualities in things. Another sense would afford us another set of perceptions or qualities, and so on *ad infinitum*.⁴³¹

What was true of ‘special sensation’, Bax observed, was ‘true of consciousness as a whole’.⁴³² Hence, he concluded the first part of the article with the claim that, when considered from the standpoint of the ‘doctrine of Evolution’, ‘a fundamentally higher form of consciousness than the present is not merely possible but probable’.⁴³³

Imitating Spencer’s evolutionary schema, Bax distinguished three successive epochs of evolution: the inorganic, the organic, and the superorganic. The first two of these epochs had been completed, he argued. But the third had only just commenced, with the consummation of the individual personality in society. Drawing further support from Spencer, Bax suggested that analogies between ‘the cell, the biological unit, and the individual, the sociological unit,’ lent

a high degree of probability to the assumption that the mode of evolution in the less known and less complete, the sociological or conscious order, presents in the more advanced stages at which we have not yet arrived similar broad analogies with the corresponding known stages of the biological or organic order, as in the less advanced.⁴³⁴

If, then, he concluded,

⁴³⁰ Ibid., p. 48.

⁴³¹ Bax, ‘Ideal of the Future (Part One)’, p. 93.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Bax, ‘Ideal of the Future (Part Two)’, p. 137.

From the barest sentiency pertaining to the lowest form of organism through the more and more definite sentiency of organisms higher in the scale finally issues the consciousness of the individual man, which consciousness merely represents the differentiated aggregate of sentiencies present in the cellular constituents of his organism. May we not thence infer... the evolution from the superorganic or social unit, viz., the individual, or personality, of a form of consciousness, based on superorganic conditions, inconceivably higher than the individual or personal consciousness which is based on merely organic conditions; a form of social or collective consciousness as much higher than individual consciousness as that is higher than the simple sentiency of protoplasm, or as we may term it, "cellular consciousness".⁴³⁵

That, in any case, seemed to Bax to be the 'inevitable and logical consequence of an acceptance of the doctrine of evolution.'⁴³⁶

With the above arguments set in place Bax could thus now proceed with the task of formulating the human ideal. He endeavoured to conclude that task in two stages. Like Spencer, Bax argued, firstly, that a human ideal must be based 'on the feeling of happiness'.⁴³⁷ But with that admission, he conceded, one was immediately confronted with 'the apparent ethical antinomy' established by Mill. That is, 'the distinction between *quantity* and *quality* in happiness'.⁴³⁸ For Bax, however, this was merely an 'essential preliminary'.⁴³⁹ The fact that so many 'intellectual' men opted for the miserable state of Mill's hypothetical Socrates where 'the reverse of happiness is pictured', rather than the happy condition of Mill's hypothetical pig, indicated that there 'must, therefore, be an element in the problem other than the pleasure or happiness at present realisable or even conceivable by us.'⁴⁴⁰ That additional element, Bax posited, echoing again the early Spencer's teleological argument, 'is an extra-individual or social

⁴³⁵ Ibid., p. 138.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., p. 139.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

impulse at present for the most part unconscious, towards an ideal goal which, though in a higher grade of evolution coincident with happiness, is not invariably so at the present time.’⁴⁴¹

In the light of that deduction and the others outlined above, the ‘condition of the realisation’ of the human ideal resided, then, for Bax, ‘in the intensification of the Conscious’.⁴⁴² In the second stage of his task, Bax isolated the three central ideas constitutive of the Human Ideal, namely ‘the moral idea in its widest sense, whether it be termed Love, Social sympathy, Goodness; the aesthetic idea, Beauty; and the intellectual or philosophic idea, Truth.’⁴⁴³ ‘The fallacy of Theism’, he averred, ‘consists in transferring these ideas, given only in the consciousness of humanity to an anthropomorphic fiction outside that consciousness’.⁴⁴⁴ Bax summarised his argument as follows:

It is the innate feeling in men of the transcendental character of the Human Ideal, and of the insufficiency of its mere empirical realisation which has led them... to refer these ideas of love, beauty, and truth, to an extra-human source, rather than to regard them as the essential though as yet undeveloped element in consciousness itself, or, in other words, in Humanity.⁴⁴⁵

Bax borrowed the notion of a collective human consciousness from Hartmann. He simply inverted Hartmann’s pessimistic verdict on its historical import.⁴⁴⁶ Instead of bringing the world to an end upon attaining that collective mental state Bax envisaged new vistas. ‘Western Europe’, he wrote, ‘representing as it does, the highest society as yet evolved, may be, nevertheless, deemed to occupy a position in the super organic scale no more than parallel to the mollusc in the organic’.⁴⁴⁷ The ‘waves of

⁴⁴¹ Spencer, *Social Statics*, p. 81. Bax, ‘Ideal of the Future (Part Two)’, p. 139.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴⁴⁶ Gardner, ‘Hartmann’s Philosophy of the Unconscious’, pp. 181, 187.

⁴⁴⁷ Bax, ‘Ideal of the Future (Part Two)’, p. 138.

enthusiasm which at times sweep over whole communities'; 'the simultaneous though entirely independent discovery or invention'; the 'widespread intellectual and moral movements such as that of the sixth century before Christ, or of the Modern Revolutionary period'; as well as 'the phenomena known to social pathologists as epidemic mania and epidemic delusion'; although only 'dim indications', were evidence, Bax argued, 'of a collective psychic development of the social man in the future.'⁴⁴⁸

Bax's cooptation of Hartmann was a singular event.⁴⁴⁹ However, Bax was not travelling entirely against the prevailing intellectual winds. Spencer, for example, was also an exponent of perfectionism.⁴⁵⁰ Spencer may not have subscribed to Bax's ideas on human agency and the potential mastery of nature – that, in short, 'the psychical progressively *tends* to supplant the physical as a causal agency' – but he did have confidence in the notion that, 'the belief in human perfectibility, merely amounts to the belief, that... man will eventually become completely suited to his mode of

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Edward Carpenter, as Stanley Pierson recognised, provides the closest parallel. It is, indeed, true, for example, to say that the 'concept of "exfoliation" served Carpenter much as the notion of the "alogical" served Bax; it freed him from the circle of mechanical necessity or physical laws and made qualitative change possible.' *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism*, p. 102. The 'alogical' is discussed in Chapter 9. But it is also worth noting here Carpenter's similarly critical stance on modern science. He wrote: 'For practical results and brief predictions it affords a quantity of useful generalisations... which bear about the same relation to the actual world that a map does to the country it is supposed to represent.' *Civilisation*, p. 84. For further analysis see Christopher E. Shaw, 'Identified with the One: Edward Carpenter, Henry Salt, and the Ethical Socialist Philosophy of Science' in Tony Brown (ed.), *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism* (London, Frank Cass & Co, 1990). See also Thomas Lineham, *Modernism and British Socialism* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁴⁵⁰ See Stefan Collini, 'Political Theory and the "Science of Society" in Victorian Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 23/1 (1980), pp. 203-231. For Spencer see David Wiltshire, *The Social and Political Thought of Herbert Spencer* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978); and Mark Francis, *Herbert Spencer and the Invention of Modern Life* (Chesham, Acumen, 2007).

life.’⁴⁵¹ The ‘scientific morality’ that Spencer attempted to construct on the back of the existence of an innate ‘Moral Sense’ functioned as a model for Bax’s own reinvention of utilitarianism.⁴⁵² Bax’s human ideal was akin to the necessary, but, as yet, unrealized, perfect condition of morality that Spencer argued mankind was ineluctably tending toward.

As to ‘the question of the immediate future of society’, here too, Bax took inspiration from Spencer.⁴⁵³ Adopting Spencer’s evolutionary ‘law’ of the development from homogeneity to heterogeneity, Bax suggested that ‘Society has passed through the stage of primitive communism, or, as it may be termed, undifferentiated socialism, from which every successive stage of civilisation has been an increasing divergence in the direction of individualism.’⁴⁵⁴ Pure individualism, however, was only a ‘transitory phase’. It had, moreover, ‘well-nigh run its course’.⁴⁵⁵ In keeping with the Spencerian framework, it appeared to Bax, then, that the ‘modern revolution’ would be ‘a fusion of these two principles’, namely, undifferentiated Socialism and individualism, emanating in ‘a *differentiated* communism or socialism.’⁴⁵⁶ In the summary of Socialism that Bax framed in the closing passage of ‘The Ideal of the Future’, the Comtian inflections of his previous effort were thus gone. By 1881, that influence had been conspicuously purged from his writing.⁴⁵⁷ In its stead,

⁴⁵¹ Bax, ‘Ideal of the Future (Part One)’, p. 95. Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics; Or, the Conditions Essential to Human Happiness Specified, and the First of the Developed* (New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1883), p. 78.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 33.

⁴⁵³ Bax, ‘Ideal of the Future (Part Two)’, p. 142.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁷ Furthermore, by 1883 Bax’s utterances concerning the Comtists were no longer sympathetic in nature. He described them as a ‘body of thinkers slavishly adhering to every detail of a master’. *Kant’s Prolegomena and Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science. Translated from the Original, with a Biography and*

Bax inserted an amalgamation of Spencer and Marx. He invoked, on the one hand, the language of militarism and industrialism intrinsic to Spencer's sociology; and, on the other, he invoked the language of class struggle and revolution as expounded by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*.

Of course, for Spencer, Socialism was an extension of militarism, not – pace Bax – its negation. His views on this issue are discussed in Chapter 10.⁴⁵⁸ Bax's use of Spencer demonstrated, at the same time, however, the extensive distance between himself and Marx. Certainly, Marx had been right to isolate Bax as a potentially promising protégé. For Bax's enthusiasm for far-reaching social reconstruction was surely beyond dispute. Yet, while Bax did not suffer from the kind of 'British philistinism' afflicting Hyndman and Mill, there remained a great deal to put Bax and Marx at odds. Bax's emphasis on religion was one such issue. But his scant regard for Marx's painstaking critique of political economy was an even greater deviation from the emphases afforded priority by Marx: i.e. the elucidation of the material preconditions of a feasible post-capitalist society. Over time, as we shall see in Chapters 8, 9 and 10, Bax moved closer to Marx. But, as we shall also see in Chapters 8, 9, and 11, Bax's ideas would continue to conflict with Engels's. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 discuss how Bax picked up the threads of the arguments set out here.

Introduction, by Ernest Belfort Bax (London, George Bell and Sons, 1883), p. c. Later still, he quietly ridiculed both sections of the Positivist movement. On the one hand, he repudiated the assertion 'that there is a difference of attitude, amounting, indeed, to a change of front, between the earlier and the later sides of Comte's doctrine'. And on the other, he lampooned 'the exceedingly funny regulations of public and private conduct' cleaved to by the followers of Richard Congreve. Ernest Belfort Bax, *A Handbook to the History of Philosophy* (London, George Bell and Sons, 1886), pp. 372, 373.

⁴⁵⁸ Bax thus exhibited what Wolfe termed "anti-Spencerian Spencerism". Wolfe was therefore mistaken to suppose that Annie Besant was probably 'the first English Socialist' to use Spencer's evolutionary theory in that way. *From Radicalism to Socialism*, pp. 264, 265.

A Crowd of Young Bourgeois Intelligentsia

In a letter to the German Socialist politician August Bebel written in August 1883, Engels gave his estimation of the Democratic Federation, the British body led by Hyndman then entering its third successive year, the body, that is, that he had refused to support at its inception two years earlier. Engels counselled Bebel not to let himself 'be bamboozled into thinking' that there was 'a real proletarian movement' going on in England.⁴⁵⁹ Despite that injunction, though, Engels had revised his assessment of the fledgling DF favourably since his previous utterances on the subject issued in a letter to Eduard Bernstein the previous year. In May 1882, Engels wrote to Bernstein that the DF was 'of no importance at all'.⁴⁶⁰ Yet, by August 1883, he had reversed that position. Engels conceded to Bebel that the 'elements at present active might become important, now that they have accepted our theoretical programme and thus acquired a basis'.⁴⁶¹ However, it was not just the 'crowd of young bourgeois intelligentsia' enthusiastic about the new ideas that had altered Engels's perspective.⁴⁶² Hyndman had been upgraded too. In 1882, Hyndman was capable, according to Engels, of playing only 'third fiddle'. By 1883, he was 'hopelessly jingoistic but not stupid'.⁴⁶³ Engels, besides, did not arrive at those conclusions alone. The DF and its

⁴⁵⁹ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 47. *Engels: 1883-1886* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1993), p. 54.

⁴⁶⁰ Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 46, p. 251.

⁴⁶¹ Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 47, p. 54.

⁴⁶² This is the translation used by Collins in 'The Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation', p. 48. The more conventional translation is 'a number of young people have lately emerged from amongst the bourgeoisie'. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 47, p. 54.

⁴⁶³ Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 46, p. 251. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 47, p. 54.

leader had begun to receive attention, as we shall see in Chapters 6 and 10, from other contemporaries.

Engels's emended remarks on the prospects of the DF were, of course, hedged with qualifications. While Engels accepted that the DF 'may become important', he added that, it would only do so, 'if a spontaneous movement broke out amongst the workers here and' the new elements active within it 'succeeded in getting hold of it.'⁴⁶⁴ Until then, he continued, 'they will continue to be so many isolated individuals with, behind them, an omnium-gatherum of muddle-headed sects, the remnant of the great movement of the forties, but nothing more.'⁴⁶⁵ Engels rehearsed in his letter to Bebel the argument he deposited more fully in *Commonweal*, in 1885. He assured Bebel that 'a really universal labour movement will come about here... only when the workers become sensible of the fact that England's world monopoly has been broken', when, that is to say, 'the economic basis' of their 'political nullity' had finally been confounded.⁴⁶⁶

Prior to the electoral fiasco of 1885, estimations of the size and strength of the Social Democratic Federation (the DF simply under a new name) were typically liberal.⁴⁶⁷ However, the DF occupied a subordinate

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 54-55.

⁴⁶⁷ As Shaw commented on 'the Tory money job' at the 1885 election: 'Before it took place, the Federation loomed large in the imagination of the public and the political parties. This is conclusively proved by the fact that the Tories thought that the Socialists could take enough votes from the Liberals to make it worth while to pay the expenses of two Socialist candidates in London. The day after the election everyone knew that the Socialists were an absolutely negligible quantity there as far as far as voting power was concerned... What was worse, they had shocked London Radicalism, to which Tory money was an utter abomination.' 'The Fabian Society', p. 6. 'Those who have watched,' W. H. Mallock wrote, 'during the course of the last few years, certain processions that have defiled through Pall Mall and Piccadilly, on their way to this or that demonstration in Hyde Park, may perhaps have noticed the presence here and there of a banner inscribed with the proposition that 'Wealth is the creation of labour.' These banners, we have reason to believe, were the ensigns of a certain body which calls itself the 'Democratic Federation.' It is, at all events, a fact that such a body exists; that its members are so numerous as to be counted by

rung in the hierarchy of concerns for opponents of State intervention. The land reforms of the second Gladstone government, the New Radicalism of Chamberlain and Dilke, and the reception received by Henry George represented more pressing causes for disquiet for political individualists.⁴⁶⁸ The DF, at any rate, as Engels indicated, was only just beginning to find its feet as a Socialist organisation. The manifesto, *Socialism made plain*, published in 1883, signified the consummation of the DF's commitment to Socialist politics. The withdrawal of the Radical clubs after the Tyrone by-election, discussed in Chapter 3, had made it possible. But the influx of middle-class Radicals receptive to modern Socialism, who helped to boost the DF's diminished ranks between 1882 and 1883, still had to be won to the project of delivering the 'scientific' form of Socialism that Hyndman envisaged.

The DF had to compete for the allegiance of its members with at least three other contemporary groups: the English Land Nationalisation Society founded by Wallace in 1881, the Fellowship of the New Life – the parent body of the Fabian Society – started by Thomas Davidson in 1883, and the Land Reform Union organised around George's ideas established at the same time.⁴⁶⁹ In other words, 'scientific Socialism' was by no means the only game in town: forward-looking, social-reforming Radicals could pick and choose from the various proposals for land reform like those suggested

tens of thousands; and that their main object is neither more nor less than to imbibe and disseminate the principles of advanced Continental Socialism.' W. H. Mallock, 'England for All', *The Quarterly Review*, 156/312 (Oct. 1883), p. 359. Mallock estimated Hyndman's abilities highly. See *Ibid*; and D. J. Ford, 'W. H. Mallock and Socialism in England, 1880-1918', in Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History*, p. 321.

⁴⁶⁸ Bristow, 'The Liberty and Property Defence League and Individualism', p. 764. For the LPDL see, also, N. Seldon, 'Laissez-Faire as Dogma: The Liberty and Property Defence League, 1882-1914', in Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History*, pp. 208-233.

⁴⁶⁹ For the English Land Nationalization Society see Davidson, *Annals of Toil*, pp. 413-419. For the Fellowship of the New Life see fn. 258. And for the Land Reform Union see Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, pp. 93-94.

by George and Wallace, from the numerous strands of Anarchism, which had received an impetus in England following the International Anarchist Congress held in London in July 1881, and from the revamped Christian Socialism of Stuart Headlam.⁴⁷⁰

Viewed in that light, it is easy to see, then, why Engels revised his assessment of Hyndman. For it was Hyndman who almost single-handedly persuaded the ‘young bourgeois’ intellectuals who entered the DF’s ranks between 1882 and 1883 – young intellectuals like J. L. Joynes, R. P. B. Frost, and H. H. Champion, associated with the *Christian Socialist* – of the merit of Marx’s economics and philosophy of history. Hyndman did so, furthermore, with neither a newspaper nor a journal to assist him. *Justice*, the newspaper of the SDF, was founded in 1884. Likewise, *To-day*, the first expressly ‘scientific’ Socialist journal, began circulating also that year. So, although Hyndman had fully assimilated, by 1883, what he took to be Marx’s theory, he had no literary vehicle at his disposal to disseminate it. The public platform would have to suffice.

Hyndman, in part, offset that deficiency by publishing *The Historical Basis of Socialism in England*. Struck by a remark made by Lassalle, the German Socialist and rival of Marx, ‘that he regretted he had not written what he had to write before he went out into the exhausting toil of public agitation’, Hyndman set to work on the book in the Spring of 1883.⁴⁷¹ It was published soon after in November. *The Historical Basis* was the first indigenous popularisation of ‘scientific’ Socialist ideas. As we shall see, it documented the distance, ideologically speaking, that Hyndman had

⁴⁷⁰ For the dissemination and uptake of Anarchist ideas in Britain see John Quail, *The Slow Burning Fuse. The Lost History of the British Anarchists* (London, Paladin, 1978); and Hermia Oliver, *The International Anarchist Movement in Late Victorian London* (London, Croom Helm, 1983).

⁴⁷¹ Hyndman, *Record*, p. 284. For Marx’s relationship with Lassalle see Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, pp. 437-448.

travelled in the space of just over two years. But, as we shall also see, it documented, in addition, the more general shift away from the dogmatic allegiance to the principle of laissez faire that Mill and Cairns had set themselves against over a decade before. This chapter takes up the first of those phenomena. Chapter 6 takes up the second.

The Historical Basis has not fared well in the hands of historians of British Socialism. The first part of this chapter contests three claims issued by historians about Hyndman's book. The first claim, issued by Hyndman's only scholarly biographer, Chushichi Tsuzuki, is that there had been 'little change in Hyndman's political views' in the interval between writing *The Historical Basis* and *England for All*.⁴⁷² The second claim, posited by Willard Wolfe, has two parts: it is that, firstly, few vulgarizations 'reduced Marxism so completely to the bare bones of economic theory and economic history' than Hyndman's efforts in the 1880s, and that, second, in *The Historical Basis*, Hyndman 'attempted to synthesise the teachings of Marx with those of Rodbertus and Lassalle'.⁴⁷³ Finally, the third and most recent claim, issued by Bevir, is that *The Historical Basis* 'owed as much to William Cobbett as it did to Marx'.⁴⁷⁴ The following paragraphs will respond to each claim in turn.

First of all, unlike *England for All*, *The Historical Basis* was not 'an extremely moderate proposal', as Pease accurately described the former text. It betrayed no continuities with 'The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch'; it accomplished a complete break with Mill; and the appeal to a 'higher ideal of patriotism' had also been axed. Hyndman, in short, had ditched the

⁴⁷² Tsuzuki, *Hyndman and British Socialism*, p. 51.

⁴⁷³ Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, pp. 98, 99.

⁴⁷⁴ Bevir, *Making of British Socialism*, p. 78.

‘One Nation version of New Liberalism’, which informed the earlier proposal. He inserted, instead, a model of Socialism plucked directly from Engels and Marx. Class struggle, Hyndman now posited, was ‘the necessary companion or fore-runner of all progress’; modern governments, he exclaimed, were ‘merely boards of directors elected in the interest’ of the ruling class; force, or ‘fear of force’, he averred, was ‘the only reasoning’ understood by a ‘dominant estate’; and Socialism, he now argued, meant a society where the maxim ‘from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs’ had been made operative.⁴⁷⁵ While in 1881 the language of ‘scientific Socialism’ was still alien to Hyndman, by 1883 Hyndman was a fully paid up member of the ‘scientific Socialist’ school, then beginning to emerge under Engels’s tutelage. Engels now occupied the position previously held by Mill in Hyndman’s mental landscape – a change of no small importance.

Strictly speaking, turning now to the second claim, there was no such thing as ‘Marxism’ during the 1880s. As we heard in the introduction, the intellectual tradition that answered to that word in the 1890s did not answer to it a decade before. There was no theory – contrary to the opinion of Wolfe – going by that description for Hyndman therefore to vulgarize. It is clear that, to take a less pedantic stance, Hyndman had assimilated many of the basic precepts of the tradition later designated by the term. But it is still not the case that Hyndman’s ‘Marxism’ was curiously reductionist. He did not disregard the philosophical and sociological strands of the theory.⁴⁷⁶ On the contrary, over the course of the decade, Hyndman incorporated the

⁴⁷⁵ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, pp. 137, 408, 200, 469.

⁴⁷⁶ Certainly, Wolfe’s point may have some plausibility insofar as one concentrates only on *England for All* and – less convincingly – *The Historical Basis*. But as soon as those texts are integrated into Hyndman’s overall oeuvre the point no longer stands up.

dialectical ‘law’ governing ‘all organic and inorganic growths’.⁴⁷⁷ He also incorporated Engels’s appraisal of the ‘epoch-making’ work of Lewis Morgan.⁴⁷⁸ But, in 1883, Engels’s rendering of Marx was still under construction. His philosophical work – the only real source, in the absence of Marx’s own unpublished, early philosophical writings – was not yet in full swing.⁴⁷⁹ The first part of Wolfe’s claim does not thus bear scrutiny.

The second part of Wolfe’s claim, namely, that Hyndman had attempted to synthesise Marx, Rodbertus and Lassalle in *The Historical Basis*, is no more credible.⁴⁸⁰ Certainly, Hyndman did appeal to both authors. But he also appealed to Cairnes, Henry Sidgwick, W. T. Thornton, and Francis Walker, among others. Hyndman, in short, had no scruples about combining apparently incongruous sources. He leant heavily, as we shall see in this chapter, on his own intellectual heritage, as well as on thinkers whom he associated with the German Historical School. The discrepancies were ironed out later. Wolfe, then, it is fair to say, grossly exaggerated the import of a few quotations. At any rate, notwithstanding Hyndman’s promiscuity, *The Historical Basis* was still primarily derivative of the writings of Engels and Marx. More precisely, it was derivative of four chief texts: *Capital*, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, and *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*.⁴⁸¹ Taken

⁴⁷⁷ Hyndman, *The Economics of Socialism*, p. 3.

⁴⁷⁸ For Hyndman’s use of Morgan see *The Evolution of Revolution*. Hyndman, nonetheless, showed varying degrees of commitment to each of those strands, genuinely adopting the second while paying what seems more like lip service to the first.

⁴⁷⁹ For example, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of German Classical Philosophy*, first published in article form in German in 1886, became the ‘canonical source’. Tom Rockmore, ‘Engels, Lukacs, and Kant’s Thing-in-Itself’, in Steger and Carver (eds.), *Engels After Marx*, pp. 148-149.

⁴⁸⁰ See also Crick, *History of the Social Democratic Federation*, p. 33.

⁴⁸¹ It is worth noting that Hyndman was also familiar with *Zur Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*, the introduction to which performed such a pivotal role in the subsequent history of ‘Marxism’. *Historical Basis*, p. 435.

together, they provided Hyndman with the empirical and conceptual framework of his account.

The claim that *The Historical Basis* was equally as indebted to Cobbett as it was to Marx naturally elides this feature of Hyndman's work. In contrast to Marx and Engels, however, Cobbett played only a walk on part. It is undeniably true that, in showing the useful functions that the Catholic Church nominally fulfilled in 'the social economy' of 'English society in the middle ages', Hyndman borrowed his argument from Cobbett's iconoclastic book, *A History of the Protestant Reformation*.⁴⁸² But Hyndman borrowed no less frequently from Thorold Rogers' *A History of Agriculture and Prices* and Lujo Brentano's introduction to Toulmin Smith's *English Guilds* in his history of pre-Reformation England.⁴⁸³ Moreover all three sources were confined to the first two chapters of Hyndman's book. Hyndman's recourse to Marx's work is, by contrast, integrated into *The Historical Basis* throughout. Those very chapters, furthermore, were directly modelled on a section of *Capital*. They were modelled on its final, most deeply historical part, 'The So-Called Primitive Accumulation', where Marx also deployed the aforementioned sources. The next section of this chapter examines this connection in further detail.

In the final section of *Capital*, Marx sought to illuminate the process that, beginning in the sixteenth century, cleared the way for the capitalist system. He sought to chart the history of the expropriation of the agricultural population from the land, which precipitated 'the English working class...

⁴⁸² Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, pp. 16, 14.

⁴⁸³ J. Thompson, 'The reception of Lujo Brentano's thought in Britain, 1870-1910', <http://research-information.bristol.ac.uk/files/3005621/Brentano%20in%20Britain.pdf> accessed 23 May 2017.

without any transition from its golden into its iron age.’⁴⁸⁴ In the first three chapters of *The Historical Basis* Hyndman followed suit. He recycled Marx’s periodisation; he reproduced the stages that Marx isolated in the historical process ‘divorcing the producer from the means of production’, stretching from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth; and he paraphrased extensively Marx’s more concise account.⁴⁸⁵ In *The Historical Basis*, Hyndman, in short, proffered a second circumlocution of *Capital* to rival the first that Marx complained of.

For example, in describing the Fall from the period of prosperity enjoyed by the free peasant proprietors and craftsmen of the fifteenth century, Hyndman echoed the metaphor used by Marx to pinpoint the origin of the ‘capitalistic era’.⁴⁸⁶ Between ‘the early years of the sixteenth century until the accession of James I., the great mass of working Englishmen’, Hyndman wrote, ‘were reduced to destitution – plunged from the age of gold into the age of iron.’⁴⁸⁷ Following Marx’s analysis, Hyndman traced ‘the rise of our distressed proletariat’ back to the growth of sheep farming and the enclosures of land, to the suppression of the monasteries and the seizure of the Church lands, to the ‘bloody legislation’ which legally set it all in place, right through to the Glorious Revolution, which finally brought the middle class to power.⁴⁸⁸ For Hyndman, as for Marx, it was an immoral tale, characterised by conquest, enslavement, robbery, and murder.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital*, p. 673.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 668.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 706.

⁴⁸⁷ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 24.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 49. The argument is laid out in full in *The Historical Basis* in chapters two and three.

⁴⁸⁹ Marx, for example, argued that, ‘In actual history... conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the great part’ in the process of primitive accumulation. ‘If money,’ he continued, ‘according to Augier, “comes into the world

Hyndman, meanwhile, based his fourth and seventh chapters on the more technical sections of *Capital*. In those sections of the book, Hyndman carried out, with two notable differences, the same kind of reconstruction of Marx's economic theory that he performed in *England for All*. The first of those differences was that, this time around, Hyndman made sure to cite Marx in the relevant places. The second, more significant difference was that Hyndman posited the 'iron law of wages' that, unbeknownst to him, Marx had condemned eight years earlier in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. However, despite the criticism it elicited from subsequent Marxist historians, Hyndman's statement of the case was less inimical to Marx's theory than Marx's polemical rejoinder to the German Lassalleans allowed for.⁴⁹⁰ In the first place, there was substantial give in Hyndman's understanding of the theory. He presented it as a tendency rather than as an 'iron law'. And second, the trend to subsistence level remuneration, in Hyndman's rendering of the theory, was governed not by the Malthusian theory of population that Marx attributed to Lassalle, but by the competition between labourers and the introduction of improved machinery.⁴⁹¹ Engels, however, also detected errors in Hyndman's book.

In the chapter on labour and surplus value, Hyndman condemned as 'unjust' the transaction between labourer and capitalist. He described the wage relation as 'a barefaced though legal robbery'.⁴⁹² In his preface to the first German edition of the *Poverty of Philosophy* issued the following year, Engels, in contesting the assertions of the so-called 'Rodbertus movement',

with a congenital blood-stain on one cheek," capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt. *Capital*, pp. 668, 711-712.

⁴⁹⁰ Collins, 'The Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation', p. 52. See also Kinna's disparaging remarks, *William Morris*, pp. 95-96. William J. Baumol, 'Marx and the Iron Law of Wages', *The American Economic Review*, 73/2 (1983), pp. 303-308.

⁴⁹¹ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, pp. 116-119. Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1972), p. 22.

⁴⁹² Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, pp. 132, 133.

which had emerged in Germany during the late 1870s, indirectly set Hyndman right. He did so by reproaching Rodbertus, ‘the idol of the place hunters of today’, for precisely that kind of ‘application of morality to economics’.⁴⁹³ ‘Marx’, Engels averred, ‘never based his demands upon’ an equalitarian application of Ricardian theory, ‘but upon the inevitable collapse of the capitalist mode of production which is daily taking place before our eyes to an ever greater degree; he says only that surplus value consists of unpaid labour, which is a simple fact.’⁴⁹⁴

Hyndman may not have been the main target. But he was almost certainly intentionally implicated by Engels’s utterances.⁴⁹⁵ Whether or not Engels’s relativist stance actually properly represented Marx’s position is another question. But Hyndman fell prey to having it both ways – that is, to denouncing capitalism as unjust on the one hand, while maintaining a non-normative critique on the other. While Hyndman, evidently impressed by Charles Bray’s equalitarian judgements, sought to buttress his economic determinism with a trans-historical moral evaluation of the wage relation, Engels made sure in his preface to duly convict Bray of utopianism.⁴⁹⁶ In the following years Hyndman expunged appeals to rights and justice from his Socialist theory.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹³ Vernon L. Lidtke, *Outlawed Party. Social Democracy in Germany, 1878-1890* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 171-175. Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1956), pp. 8, 12.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁹⁵ Engels portentously described Hyndman as ‘nothing but a caricature of Lassalle’ in a letter to Bernstein in late-1885, a charge he repeated in a letter to Paul Lafargue posted on the same day. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works. Vol. 47*, pp. 367, 370.

⁴⁹⁶ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, pp. 132-133. Frederick Engels, ‘Preface to the First German Edition’, in Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁹⁷ Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, p. 254.

In the event, Hyndman's book owed almost as much to Engels as it did to Marx. In fact, as we shall now see, Engels's self-styled 'second fiddle' was ultimately the more audible of the two.⁴⁹⁸ In the first place, as with the three chapters that Hyndman modelled on Marx's survey of the so-called primitive accumulation, he modelled two more on two sections of Engels's book, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. In the chapter entitled 'The Growth of the Proletariat', Hyndman imitated the analysis presented in the introduction to Engels's book, where Engels set out the contours of England's 'industrial revolution'. And in the chapter entitled 'Movements of the People', Hyndman imitated the analysis laid out in 'Labour Movements', where Engels delineated the history of resistance to capitalism on the part of the proletariat.

In the first of those chapters, Hyndman, by way of introduction, paraphrased Engels's claim that, 'The industrial revolution is of the same importance for England as the political revolution for France, and the philosophical revolution for Germany'.⁴⁹⁹ Paragraph for paragraph, Hyndman followed Engels in charting the process, beginning with the introduction of the spinning-jenny, that transformed a 'country, like other countries, with small towns, limited and simple industry, and a stupid but relatively large agricultural population' into 'a country like no other' – a country, that is, 'with a metropolis of three millions of inhabitants, with colossal manufacturing towns, with a world-embracing industry and commerce, a hard-working, densely crowded population, two-thirds of whom were engaged in manufacturing industry'.⁵⁰⁰ The victory of machine work in one English industry after another had ensured, he continued, that

⁴⁹⁸ Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 47, p. 202.

⁴⁹⁹ Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, p. 50. Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 138.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 149

there ‘was as much difference between the England of 1780 and the England of 1848 as between the France of the ancien regime and the France of the ‘48 Republic.’⁵⁰¹

But, Hyndman insisted – echoing the second section of Engels’s book – the ‘industrial revolution’ had not been achieved without resistance. Taking Engels’s history of defiance as a template, Hyndman stated that the ‘first effect of the new methods’ was not to engender a struggle for a more favourable division of the proceeds of capitalist industry, but rather ‘to bring about a series of attacks by the workmen upon the machinery itself.’⁵⁰² The ‘growth of definite working-class combinations for economical objects’ was a more protracted development, helped along by ‘the repeal of the law against combination, in 1824’ – ‘a concession’, Hyndman wrote, ‘which would hardly have been gained from the House of Commons after 1832’, when ‘the Reform Bill had legally sanctioned the distinction between bourgeoisie and proletariat, and made the bourgeoisie the ruling class.’⁵⁰³ Hyndman agreed with Engels’s judgement that ‘something more’ was ‘needed than Trades Unions and strikes to break the power’ of the bourgeoisie.’⁵⁰⁴ He also agreed that Chartism, as ‘the compact form’ of the workers’ ‘opposition to the bourgeoisie’, compensated for the isolation of industrial action.⁵⁰⁵ Still shadowing Engels’s interpretation, Hyndman argued that Chartism was a social as well as a political phenomenon, both a movement for democratic reform and ‘a knife and fork question’.⁵⁰⁶ The Chartists were ‘the first real working-class party’, he held, ‘that had come to

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., p. 150. Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, p. 50.

⁵⁰² Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 204.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., p. 213. Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, p. 241.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 245.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 254.

⁵⁰⁶ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 211.

the front... for many generations'.⁵⁰⁷ Yet, while Engels, writing in 1845, predicted the 'union of Socialism with Chartism' as the 'next step' in the party's development, Hyndman, from the vantage point of almost forty years on, had to account instead for its failure.⁵⁰⁸ He did so, however, by affirming Engels's reasoning. Hence, according to Hyndman, it was precisely 'the absence of sound social ideas of reconstruction' that 'brought the entire movement to a standstill.'⁵⁰⁹

Unlike Engels, Hyndman had to account not only for the failure of Chartism, but for the failure too of the proletariat to perform its prescribed role in the thirty years following Chartism's defeat. The fact that industrial capitalism had not imploded under the weight of its own contradictions, ushering into power a proletariat conscious of its world-historical task demanded an explanation. Hyndman furnished one in his eighth chapter entitled 'The Period of Apathy'. Like Engels in *Commonweal* two years later, he blamed the workers' quiescence on the so-called 'aristocracy of labour'.⁵¹⁰ By virtue of its indifference to the lot of the 'unskilled worker' and to 'any attempt being made by the workers as a class to form a definite party of their own', the labour aristocracy had impeded 'the advance of their own class as a class', he argued.⁵¹¹ For Hyndman, however, the impasse was

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 209.

⁵⁰⁸ Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, p. 264.

⁵⁰⁹ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 209.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., p. 287.

⁵¹¹ Ibid., pp. 288, 290. On the notion of an 'aristocracy of labour', Hyndman took his lead from the old Chartist leader, James Bronterre O'Brien, a figure of immense importance for many members of the DF. Marx, to be sure, expressed similar sentiments privately in moments of exasperation. See Stedman Jones, "Pressure from Without", p. 129. But Lenin, by way of Engels, is usually held responsible for its theorisation. See Kent, 'Presence and Absence', p. 449. Hyndman also notably used the language of a 'revival' of Socialism in his exchange with Herbert Spencer in 1884. *Socialism and Slavery. Being an Answer to Mr. Herbert Spencer's Attack upon the Democratic Federation, Contemporary Review, April, 1884* (London, Modern Press, 1884), p. 3. For the view that O'Brien had anticipated some of the central ideas enunciated by Marx and Engels see Theodore Rothstein, *From Chartism to Labourism* (New York & London, Garland, 1984). Rothstein, like

resolvable politically. It did not presuppose, as it did for Engels, the disintegration of 'England's world monopoly'. Rather, the return of just twenty 'working-class members to Parliament' would be sufficient.⁵¹² Part of the reason why that had not happened already, he posited, was that the 'cleverest of our artisans, the finest of our labourers, the clearest-sighted of our working-class politicians' had 'abandoned the apparently hopeless struggle against class inequality' by means of emigration – the safety-valve of 'the capitalist machine'.⁵¹³

The view that emigration provided a solution to the problem of 'surplus labour' was a staple of mid-Victorian political economists, political economists, namely, like Fawcett and Mill.⁵¹⁴ In invoking it as an explanation for the absence of a proletarian conquest of power, Hyndman betrayed again his liberal intellectual heritage. In the same chapter, Hyndman also echoed Fawcett's appraisal of trade unions. It should not be disguised, he urged, following Fawcett's analysis in the *Manual of Political Economy*, 'that the Trade Unions enforced combination and maintained the rule of each for all among themselves by fierce terrorism'.⁵¹⁵ Like Fawcett, Hyndman believed that they were more morally suspect than some of their advocates let on.⁵¹⁶ The rise of the New Unionism did not alter his opinion,

Hyndman, his long-term opponent in the SDF, also formulated a three-stage model of nineteenth-century working-class politics.

⁵¹² Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 291.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 266, 270.

⁵¹⁴ Bell, 'Mill on Colonies', pp. 38-45; Goldman, 'Fawcett and the Social Science Association', p. 169.

⁵¹⁵ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 214. Fawcett, *Manual of Political Economy*, pp. 243-244. Taking up the question of syndicalism in the following century, Hyndman argued: 'That each set of workers in every particular trade should set themselves by strikes, sabotage, ca' canny, and the rest of it, to render it impossible for the owners to work that trade to a profit, and thus should obtain possession of the whole industry for themselves apart from all the rest of society, is as antisocial and hopeless a proposition as has ever been made'. He also conceded that in any ordinary strike 'the case of the so-called "blacklegs" is hard.' *Further Reminiscences*, pp. 459-460, 469.

⁵¹⁶ The University Liberals responsible for *Essays on Reform* registered the biggest shift in perception as to how trade unions were viewed. See, for example, R. H.

either. In theory, Hyndman imbibed the materialist ontology, which asserted that ‘economical necessities are reflected in the thoughts of men’, that Engels attributed to Marx. But, in practice, his understanding of social development was less deterministic.⁵¹⁷ Although he cleaved to it erratically during the 1880s, Hyndman reserved a special sympathy for parliamentary representation – and, later, he posited the need for a preparatory process of ‘psychologic comprehension’.⁵¹⁸

That Engels’s so-called ‘second fiddle’ was really nothing of the sort in this context, does not become apparent in *The Historical Basis* until its final chapter. There we learn that, Engels’s ideas, however poorly imbibed, were, instead, the commanding presence throughout. In purely spatial terms, Marx, to be sure, had the better innings. But it was Engels who determined, crucially, how Marx was read. Thus, armed with *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* and the report of Engels’s graveside speech, Hyndman recycled three of the four components of Engels’s gloss, as outlined in the introduction: namely, the materialist conception of history, the positivist rendering of Socialism as science, and the Marx-Darwin analogy, leaving only the materialist dialectic in abeyance.⁵¹⁹ It was neither Marx nor Cobbett, Lassalle nor Rodbertus, but Engels, in other words, who provided the conceptual scaffolding for Hyndman’s book. That said, in invoking ‘the irresistible tendency of the time’ in chapter eight Hyndman did not take Engels’s remarks on the capitulation of capitalist society

Hutton’s utterances on the benign nature of trade societies in ‘The Political Character of the Working Classes’, in *Essays on Reform* (London, Macmillan & Co, 1867), pp. 35-39.

⁵¹⁷ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 449.

⁵¹⁸ Hyndman, *Further Reminiscences*, p. 132. Not only that; Hyndman also echoed Mill in saying that ‘It is scarcely too much to say that the educated middle class of this island is better prepared to accept Socialism even to-day than is the working class’. Ibid., p. 260. ‘For my own part,’ Mill wrote, ‘I have no difficulty in admitting that Communism would even now be practicable among the elite of mankind, and may become so among the rest.’ *Representative Government*, p. 245. Cole, *History of Socialist Thought*, p. 411.

⁵¹⁹ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 435.

‘before the planned production of the invading socialist society’ as a model.⁵²⁰ He fell back, instead, on the English ‘germ-theory’ of Socialism. More particularly, Hyndman fell back on John Morley, who authored the famous statement, in 1881, ‘that in the country where Socialism has been less talked about than any other country in Europe, its principles have been most extensively applied.’⁵²¹ In so doing, Hyndman illuminated another persistent point of reference.

To say nothing of his longer-term impact, Morley’s ideas are present as well in another section of *The Historical Basis*. They account, in fact, as we shall see, for Hyndman’s comparatively inflated estimation of the efficacy of political action. Besides, Morley was also the first source of Hyndman’s exposure to something like a philosophy of history resembling historical materialism.⁵²²

Morley pursued both themes, in 1874, in a series of articles in the *Fortnightly Review*. They were collected and published that same year under the title, *On Compromise*. Hyndman’s sectarianism was undoubtedly encouraged by the position that Morley adopted in that book on where the boundary resides ‘that divides wise suspense in forming opinions, wise reserve in expressing them, and wise tardiness in trying to realise them’ from their injudicious opposites.⁵²³ In August 1884, for example, *Justice* printed the following quotation from the book: ‘It is better to wait, and to

⁵²⁰ Engels, *Socialism*, p. 102.

⁵²¹ John Morley, *The Life of Richard Cobden. Vol. I* (London, Macmillan & Co, 1881), pp. 325-326. For Morley more generally see D. A. Hamer, *John Morley. Liberal Intellectual in Politics* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1968).

⁵²² For the dissemination of deterministic views of history in Victorian Britain, much of which was inspired by Thomas Henry Buckle’s pioneering *History of Civilization*, see Eckhardt Fuchs, ‘English Positivism and German Historicism’, in Stuchtey and Wende (eds.), *British and German Historiography*, pp. 229-250.

⁵²³ John Morley, *On Compromise* (London, Macmillan & Co, 1898), p. 4.

defer the realisation of our ideas until we can realise them fully, than to defraud the future by truncating them, if truncate them we must, in order to secure a partial triumph for them in the immediate present. It is better', so the passage continued, 'to bear the burden of impracticableness, than to stifle conviction and to pare away principle until it becomes more hollowness and triviality.'⁵²⁴ That same month Hyndman imitated Morley in another article, adopting his prose in a parallel appraisal of causation in the French revolution. Needless to say, like Morley, he regarded it as mistake 'to suppose that the destructive criticism of the French philosophers ... was the great operative cause of the catastrophe which befell the old social regime.'⁵²⁵

For Morley, history provided no instance 'of mere opinion making a breach in the essential constitution of a community, so long as the political conditions were stable and the economic or nutritive conditions sound.'⁵²⁶ 'If dissolvent ideas' did make their way it was 'because society was already ripe for dissolution.'⁵²⁷ Among the agencies that brought social changes about, Morley ranked 'economic and material conditions' the highest.⁵²⁸ In this, the correspondence with Engels is obvious. Less obviously compatible, however, was Morley's suggestion that 'these changes can only be initiated by individuals or very small groups of individuals.'⁵²⁹

'The progressive tendency', Morley argued, 'can only be a tendency'.⁵³⁰ That is, 'it can only work its way through the inevitable obstructions around it, by means of persons who are possessed by the

⁵²⁴ *Justice* (Aug. 9, 1884), p. 5.

⁵²⁵ Morley, *On Compromise*, p. 259. H. M. Hyndman, 'Revolution or Reform', *Today*, 2/8 (Aug. 1884), pp. 184-185.

⁵²⁶ Morley, *On Compromise*, p. 261.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 256

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*

special progressive idea'. According to Morley, they were the holders of a 'trust', upon whom 'the advance of a community depends.'⁵³¹ But the 'fact of a new idea having come to one man', he continued, was merely a sign that it was 'already in the air'.⁵³² 'The innovator', Morley argued, 'is as much the son of his generation as the conservative.'⁵³³ In *The Historical Basis*, Hyndman echoed the point. 'It is true,' he affirmed,

that given favourable opportunities, the enthusiasm of an individual and still more the organised enthusiasm of a group of individuals may increase the rate of progress by preparing men's minds to take the earliest opportunity of giving shape to ideas which have long been floating hither and thither to the surface of the popular intelligence. But this is only to say in turn that stirring times necessarily produce active men⁵³⁴

It is certainly true that Hyndman believed that Socialism was inevitable. However, that did not mean that Hyndman was content to simply await its arrival. Rather, Hyndman insisted that a well-directed intervention would foreshorten the intermission.⁵³⁵ Hyndman was less concerned than Morley about the enervating effect of an all too ready application of the Historical Method, on the misplaced confidence, that is, invested in the law of evolution. But he did mirror Morley's view on the power of 'social energy'.⁵³⁶ Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that Hyndman embodied the very ideal of energetic action – 'both the prerequisite and the expression of the manly life' – that so many mid-Victorian Liberal intellectuals upheld.⁵³⁷ Like Fawcett and other 'muscular Liberals', Hyndman poured scorn on both 'sentimentalism' and self-

⁵³¹ Ibid., pp. 212, 213.

⁵³² Ibid., p. 217.

⁵³³ Ibid. Morley, for instance, was highly critical of the Carlylean interpretation of history as the work of 'heroes'. Hamer, *John Morley*, p. 46.

⁵³⁴ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 201.

⁵³⁵ Hyndman, *Socialism and Slavery*, p. 24.

⁵³⁶ Morley, *On Compromise*, pp. 28, 209-210.

⁵³⁷ Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 193.

absorption, the governing contrasts of the manly ideal.⁵³⁸ He shared the ethos as well as the character traits of ‘the straightforward, emphatic, and insufferably cheerful Fawcett’.⁵³⁹ Yet, while that debarred Hyndman from finding kinship with Socialists like Henry Salt, whom he dismissed as ‘sentimentalists’, Hyndman’s admiration of Morris, another – more forthright – advocate of manliness, was plain.⁵⁴⁰ The final section of this chapter will briefly consider this connection.

Often described as lacking the ‘utopian note’ that so conspicuously informed Morris’s Socialism, the association that temporarily united Hyndman and Morris between Morris’s entry into the DF in 1883 and his departure two years later with the formation of the Socialist League was less basic and fleeting than its organisational expression suggests.⁵⁴¹ For example, as Hyndman’s uncompleted utopian romance, begun in 1913, attests, he continued to draw on Morris’s body of work well into the twentieth century.⁵⁴² But, more importantly for the purposes of the chapter, Hyndman also imported some of Morris’s uniquely aesthetic insights into the concluding chapter of *The Historical Basis*.

⁵³⁸ Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘Unscientific Socialism’, in *The Religion of Socialism. Being Essays in Modern Socialist Criticism* (London, Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey & Co, 1886), p. 99. Shaw, ‘Shaw on Hyndman and Himself’, p. 287.

⁵³⁹ Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 174.

⁵⁴⁰ He wrote to Shaw, after a visit to Henry Salt: ‘I do not want the movement to become a depository of old cranks, humanitarians, vegetarians, anti-vivisectionists and anti-vaccinationists, arty-crafties and all the rest of them. We are scientific socialists and have no room for sentimentalists.’⁵⁴⁰ Quoted in Robert Skidelsky, ‘The Fabian Ethic’, in Michael Holroyd (ed.), *The Genius of Shaw. A Symposium* (London, Hodder & Staughton, 1979), p. 116. See Livesey, *Socialism, Sex, and the Culture of Aestheticism*, Ch. 1.

⁵⁴¹ Pierson, *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism*, p. 64. John Bruce Glasier complained, for example, that there was ‘Hardly a ray of idealism in it’. Quoted in Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p. 66. For Morris’s involvement with the DF see Thompson, *William Morris*, pp. 276–331.

⁵⁴² Hyndman, *Life to Come*.

The first lectures that Morris gave under the auspices of the DF were focused, as Thompson put it, on ‘those fields where his own experience gave him most authority.’⁵⁴³ That is to say, they were focused on art, or, more specifically, with the social conditions of art. Morris set out his stall most fully in two lectures in 1883: one first given to an audience at the Manchester Royal Institution in March, and the other first given in November at the Russell Club at University College Hall, Oxford. It was the latter lecture in which Morris first made his commitment to Socialism clear. Before an audience of primarily liberal undergraduate students, but also including Ruskin among its number, Morris set forth what he felt were the ‘hindrances’ that lay ‘in the way towards making art what it should be, a help and solace to the daily life of all men.’⁵⁴⁴ Morris’s conception of art was expansive. He extended the word to incorporate ‘the aspect of the externals’ of all life: not just painting, sculpture, and architecture, ‘but the shapes and colours of all household goods,’ ‘the arrangement of the fields for tillage and pasture,’ and ‘the management of towns’ and ‘highways’.⁵⁴⁵ The ‘instinct for beauty’, he argued, was ‘inborn’, and in the past, ‘when art was abundant and healthy, all men were more or less artists.’⁵⁴⁶ Morris drove a wedge between the ‘system of commercialism’, which had rendered art individualistic, ‘thwarted and checked’ the instinct for beauty, and therefore impelled art to the verge of death, and the preceding epochs, when art flourished in a ‘cooperative’ shape and men found happiness in labour.⁵⁴⁷ Hyndman, to be sure, did not follow Morris ‘in attributing to all men’ what

⁵⁴³ Thompson, *William Morris*, p. 308.

⁵⁴⁴ William Morris, ‘Art under Plutocracy’, in *The Collected Works of William Morris. Vol. XXIII. Signs of Change* (London, Longmans Green and Company, 1915), p. 164.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Morris himself felt, namely the desire for an aesthetic life.⁵⁴⁸ Nor did he invoke the Ruskinian theme of joy in labour. Hyndman's Socialism was ultimately of a much more modest kind. Nonetheless, the descriptions of industrial squalor and aesthetic blight that Morris proffered had clearly made their mark.

Borrowing directly from Morris's repertoire of Socialist argument – with which he had become familiar over the course of 1883 – Hyndman suggested, for example, that 'by combination and cooperation' society would be restored in the future to a level of architectural beauty to rival that of the middle ages or Moorish Spain. The imagination, he averred, could 'proceed on the sure footing' of what had been 'accomplished in many countries by communal effort'.⁵⁴⁹ Next, working in a fully-fledged Morrisian key, Hyndman let rip on the destruction wrought by the capitalist mode of production: 'Art fades away,' he wrote,

literature dwindles under the huckster principles which now guide society. The life of our great cities is devoid of all real beauty or magnificence; the rampant individualism which has hitherto exercised such baneful effects below still produces hideousness above. Can anything be imagined uglier than the great English cities of the nineteenth century? That there hangs around them a sense of power as well as a cloud of fetid smoke may be admitted. But the factory-owner and the jerry-builder, the advertisement contractors and the railroad companies, telegraphs and chimney-pots have taken possession, and we see a positive chaos of ugliness before which the most vigorous art-reformer slinks away hopeless. We of to-day are even worse than our immediate predecessors. They at least loved green trees and gardens even in the midst of the towns they built for us. But the greed of the speculator has taken order with the greenery too, and now there, as elsewhere, only municipal

⁵⁴⁸ Cole, *History of Socialist Thought*, p. 417. George Bernard Shaw, *Major Barbara* (London, Penguin, 1945), p. xi. Perhaps Morris deserves more credit, however. The aesthetic life which he put at the core of his vision of Socialism solved one central problem akin to that formulated by Schopenhauer, namely the problem of what people could be expected to do with an excess of spare time; the absence of work would merely result in boredom and conflict. Arthur Schopenhauer, 'On the Suffering of the World', in *Essays and Aphorisms*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London, Penguin, 1970), pp. 42-43.

⁵⁴⁹ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 454.

or State organisation comes in to remedy but too feebly the anarchy brought about by individual grasping and indifference.⁵⁵⁰

Hyndman deployed Morris's narrative of cultural aperture as a further prong in his overarching rhetorical scheme. 'If the working class have nothing to lose and all to gain by a change,' he insisted, 'so assuredly have the lovers of beauty, happiness, and freedom among the upper and middle classes'.⁵⁵¹ Put slightly differently, if the aforementioned social groups could not be moved by exhortations of historical necessity or appeals to distributive justice, then they might at least be moved by entreaties to aesthetic self-interest instead.⁵⁵² However, if Hyndman drew on Morris for the utterances he issued on the topic of art in the final section of *The Historical Basis*, he differed from him in one very important respect: in the lectures, 'Art, Wealth, and Riches' and 'Art and Plutocracy', Morris made no such concessions. Rather, so far from undertaking to meet his audiences halfway, Morris begged them 'to renounce their class pretensions and cast in their lot with the working men.'⁵⁵³ Further, Morris did not relent; he finished his lecture at the Russell Club, for instance, a gathering of young men familiar with, and sympathetic to, Toynbee's conciliatory social Radicalism, on the following belligerent note:

One man with an idea in his head is in danger of being considered a madman; two men with the same idea in common may be foolish, but can hardly be mad; ten men sharing an idea begin to act, a hundred draw attention as fanatics, a thousand and society begins to tremble, a hundred thousand and there is war abroad, and the cause has victories tangible and real; and why only a hundred thousand? You and I who agree together, it is we who have to answer that question.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 444.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Morris, 'Art and Plutocracy', p. 190.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 191. Needless to say, Morris's address caused a stir on the occasion. See J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris. Volume 2* (London, Longmans Green and Co, 1899), pp. 117-120.

Society had not yet begun to ‘tremble’, as Morris put it, but ‘attention’ – owing primarily to Hyndman’s efforts, and thereafter to Morris’s own adhesion too – had, as we shall see in the next chapter, certainly been ‘drawn’.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁵ Hyndman, for example, wrote that Morris ‘doubled our strength at a stroke’. Quoted in Thompson, *William Morris*, p. 302.

6

A Spirit of Social Revolution

The Historical Basis was divided into two parts. The first part comprised the ‘sketch of the social and economical development of England from the fifteenth century to the present time’ outlined in the previous chapter.⁵⁵⁶ The second part, on the other hand, was made up of a series of interventions in the domestic political arguments foremost at the time. The latter undertaking was not, to be sure, accomplished in all respects discretely. Hyndman’s strikes on other contemporary commentators on the British polity were integrated throughout. Nonetheless, Hyndman addressed the political debates most directly in the four chapters dedicated to the land, the position of urban workers, the poor laws, and the future of society, located in the second half of the book.

The context of Hyndman’s utterances on these subjects can also be divided into two parts, one occupying the background and the other the fore. In the foreground were the various responses that Hyndman deposited in the text to the arguments levelled by a number of extant allies and adversaries – either specified by Hyndman himself or instantly recognisable for anyone familiar with their often widely circulated work: W. L. Blackley, Fawcett, George, W. H. Mallock, and Toynbee, for instance. The background, however, was taken up by the wider and more nuanced intellectual and political shift adverted to earlier. It comprised, among other phenomena, the widespread loss of faith in co-operation and profit-sharing schemes, the desertion of orthodox political economy, the ascendancy of the

⁵⁵⁶ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. vii.

historical method and the credit assigned to Henry Maine and his successors in anthropology and its ancillary fields, as well as the acknowledgment of the poverty reigning in many British urban centres; all of which contributed, in one way or another, to the texture of Hyndman's ideas.

Taking this more allusive, but no less crucial, contextual facet as a starting-point, the career of Henry Sidgwick epitomised the first pair of these generational changes. In 'charting a course that avoided the excesses of dogmatic *laissez-faire* on one side and wholesale socialistic rejection of the status quo on the other', Sidgwick was 'typical of those who were... post-Mill adherents of political economy.'⁵⁵⁷ In an indicative move, Sidgwick bypassed in his writings the voluntary experiments in Socialism that Mill had previously lauded, choosing German Socialism, instead, as the only relevant point of reference.⁵⁵⁸ His estimation of Marx was low. But Sidgwick, like other receptive proponents of political economy in the 1880s, regarded Schäffle with a degree of approval.⁵⁵⁹ Certainly, Sidgwick had not surrendered all hope in co-operative schemes. As a project of stores, co-operation had proven effective and still retained its viability. However, Sidgwick spoke for many in suggesting that its failures in the field of production had rendered co-operation more or less redundant in the form of the more ambitious ventures envisaged by his Liberal forebears.⁵⁶⁰ Profit-sharing fared little better. Edward Pease described it, not unfairly, as 'a sickly plant'.⁵⁶¹ And in a review of a collection of Sedley Taylor's essays on the subject, John Rae expressed the increasingly pervasive fear that, far

⁵⁵⁷ Winch, *Wealth and Life*, pp. 206, 204.

⁵⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 215-217.

⁵⁵⁹ Sidgwick, 'Economic Lessons', pp. 338, 343. Winch, *Wealth and Life*, pp. 215-216.

⁵⁶⁰ Sidgwick, 'Economic Lessons', pp. 345-346.

⁵⁶¹ It was 'barely kept alive', he wrote, 'by the laborious efforts of benevolent professors.' Pease, *History of the Fabian Society*, p. 22.

from providing an equitable solution to the 'social question', 'profit-sharing might become a more powerful instrument of capitalist exploitation than day wages.'⁵⁶² Sidgwick was not, however, tempted to emulate the 'general position' of the German Socialists of the Chair, as Rae maintained of Toynbee.⁵⁶³ On the contrary, he continued to cleave to a more traditional understanding of political economy, while steering well clear, at the same time, of extreme Individualism.

Sidgwick was emblematic of the public moralists of his day insofar as he was prepared to justify a much greater range of government activity on Individualist grounds; or, insofar as he was ready to countenance certain actions on the basis of simple expediency.⁵⁶⁴ Other economists, however, were keen to make morality the linchpin of their policy suggestions. Renouncing the excessive deductivism of the older generation of political economists who were felt to be over-obligated to Ricardian theory, this tendency was most clearly represented by William Cunningham, H. S. Foxwell, and, above all, Arnold Toynbee. There were, however, other exponents of historical economics who retained an aversion to the relaxed attitude towards State intervention adopted by the latter trio.

The concept of the village community, first formulated in the 1860s, heralded the expiration of economic man in economic discourse. From then onwards, 'the English economist of the future' was required to 'study in the schools of both Mr Stubbs and Sir Henry Maine, as well as in that of Mr Mill', as T. E. Cliffe Leslie famously remarked.⁵⁶⁵ The consequences of the theoretical work on 'primitive society' were unavoidable. Nonetheless, it

⁵⁶² John Rae, 'Social Philosophy', *The Contemporary Review*, 46 (Sep. 1884), p. 460. See Edward Bristow, 'Profit-Sharing, Socialism and Labour Unrest', pp. 234-289.

⁵⁶³ Rae, 'Social Philosophy', p. 460.

⁵⁶⁴ Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology*, pp. 20-22.

⁵⁶⁵ Quoted in Collini, Winch, and Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics*, p. 249.

was the climate created by Sidgwick, rather than the disclosure that the category of private property was historically unstable, that enabled Lord Salisbury to posit in November 1883 his proposals for the housing of the poor in *The National Review*. Greeted by howls of ‘Socialism’ and ‘treachery’ in the press, it was expediency as opposed to conviction that induced him to intervene.⁵⁶⁶ Laissez-faire held good as a principle. But in the wake of the revelations concerning the depth of distress prevailing among the urban poor contained in Andrew Mearns’ pamphlet, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, a consensus was beginning to emerge that some kind of action was required.⁵⁶⁷

The Historical Basis bore the marks of all of these background factors. Indeed many were taken up directly, if albeit fleetingly, by Hyndman in the text; some on numerous occasions. Sidgwick’s book, for instance, *The Principles of Political Economy*, a discursive companion throughout, was condemned there as ‘most disappointing’.⁵⁶⁸ Cliffe Leslie, Foxwell, and Toynbee were all also mentioned, and Hyndman proclaimed his debt to the German Historical School.⁵⁶⁹ Although he did not dwell on it,

⁵⁶⁶ Anthony S. Wohl, *The Eternal Slum. Housing and Social Policy in Victorian London* (London, Edward Arnold, 1977), p. 227.

⁵⁶⁷ Salisbury, ‘Labourers’ and Artisans’ Dwellings’, *The National Review*, 2/9 (Nov. 1883), p. 306.

⁵⁶⁸ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 118. Though disappointing, it was noteworthy enough, however, for Hyndman to note that ‘Mr Henry Sidgwick, who belongs to the eclectic bourgeois school, gives up laissez faire as a “principle.”’ Ibid, p. 440.

⁵⁶⁹ Concerning Cliffe Leslie, John Chapman writing in the *Westminster Review* for October 1882 issued the following observation: ‘Perhaps no one has so lucidly set out the reasons for denying that the school of Mill and Fawcett can maintain their present principles in any state but that which now exists, as Mr. Henry George in his well-known work entitled “Progress and Poverty;” and Karl Marx’s work on “Capital,” goes even further in the same direction. The only eminent English thinker, who can be in any way said to represent these views, is, as far as we know, Mr Cliffe Leslie, but in a paper more concerned with the history than the theory of Socialism, this matter cannot be pursued further. Suffice it here to say that the main points on which a new departure is taken are these:- Firstly, the Malthusian theories are rejected as incapable of historical or logical demonstration; and secondly, the theory of wages, as stated by Mill, is similarly denied; in substitution we have the doctrine that labour is the sole element of wealth. John Chapman, ‘Socialism’, *Westminster Review*, 118/234 (Oct. 1882), p. 371.

the concept of the village community also formed part of his arsenal of arguments.⁵⁷⁰ It is clear that Hyndman had not derived the concept from Marx and Engels either, whose interest in the subject – spurred on by their respective readings of Georg von Maurer, in 1868, and Lewis Morgan almost a decade later – post-dated the publication of *Capital*.⁵⁷¹ These, rather, were simply ideas in the air, and Hyndman had imbibed them independently. Salisbury's article was also included in Hyndman's text, cited as a half-baked 'semi-Socialist' solution to the housing of the poor. And Mearns' pamphlet was wielded by Hyndman as well, as further evidence for claims that he had already made on the topic of urban deprivation.⁵⁷² Hyndman, in short, was well attuned to recent trends of an intellectual and political nature. He kept a particularly sharp eye out for validating material, incorporating comments on other current analyses on themes of a comparable kind – Emile de Laveleye's article on 'The Progress of Socialism' in *The Contemporary Review*, for example, or Samuel Barnett's evidence before the Artisans' and Labourers' Committee.⁵⁷³ Of course, Hyndman's rejection of co-operation and profit-sharing schemes went without saying. But the absence of any sustained discussion of these once ubiquitous proposals provides a measure of their decline as a Liberal panacea.

Other mainstays of mid-Victorian orthodox political economy were, however, more long-lived. Strict adherence to laissez faire no longer dominated as a principle, and the notion of the wages-fund was now largely in a state of disrepute. But free trade, freedom of contract, self-interest as

⁵⁷⁰ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 294.

⁵⁷¹ Hobsbawm, *How to Change the World*, pp. 139-140.

⁵⁷² Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, pp. 453, 353.

⁵⁷³ Emile de Laveleye, 'The Progress of Socialism', *The Contemporary Review*, 43 (Apr. 1883), pp. 561-582. Barnett also published an article in the periodical press, 'Practicable Socialism', *The Nineteenth Century*, 13/74 (Apr. 1883), pp. 554-560.

an inducement to labour, the Malthusian theory of population, and the indispensability of ‘directing minds’ in the production process, all remained firmly in place – if, albeit, in a manner more markedly self-conscious than before. That being so, these categories demanded greater attention from Hyndman.

Besides the obvious point that his book was intended as a critique of ‘middle class political economy’ (as well as ‘the history of England’ written ‘from the middle class point of view’), Hyndman was more forthcoming on these matters for two further reasons.⁵⁷⁴ On the one hand, the combined force of Fawcett’s article on ‘State Socialism and the Nationalization of the Land’, published earlier that year in *Macmillan’s Magazine*, the exchange of letters with the Liberal M.P. Samuel Smith on the topic of the DF’s manifesto (published later as *Fallacies of Socialism Exposed*), and the public assault unleashed by Mallock on *England for All* and *Socialism made Plain* in *The Quarterly Review*, had helped to focus Hyndman’s mind. None of these authors invoked, in these texts, co-operation as an ideal. But they did appeal to a remarkably unreconstructed form of orthodox political economy. In pursuing the logic of question and answer, Hyndman cleaved to the terms of the debate as he found it. He thus responded to the arguments of his detractors point for point.⁵⁷⁵ Moreover, the second subsidiary reason why Hyndman devoted protracted attention to these concerns was that they formed the principal ramparts from behind

⁵⁷⁴ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. viii.

⁵⁷⁵ For the concept of the logic of question and answer see R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of History and Other Writings in Philosophy of History* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 24-37.

which the leaders of the National Secular Society – an important source of recruits for the nascent movement – waged war against Socialism.⁵⁷⁶

In shifting consideration now to the foreground, the NSS occupied terrain in Hyndman's book similar to the above-named interlocutors. When, for example, Hyndman insisted that the 'idea of Socialism' was 'no foreign importation into England', and that revolutions were by no means alien to its inhabitants either, the profoundly anti-Socialist leadership of the NSS constituted his primary target.⁵⁷⁷ He was responding, on this occasion, to a characteristic pair of barbs regularly issued in the *National Reformer*. Like Fawcett, Smith, and Mallock, Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant continued to champion the extreme form of political Individualism that had been recently moderated.⁵⁷⁸ They, too, were censured therefore by Hyndman's retorts to the former triumvirate by implication. They were not, though, the main object of his attacks.⁵⁷⁹

Although Hyndman acknowledged organisations like the NSS and the Fellowship of the New Life in a number of speech acts, the overall force of his argument was directed at far less parochial targets. Hyndman's strategy may ultimately have 'failed to fit the mood of the people that' he 'had to win over in order to make' the 'movement a national force'. But what cannot be denied was the immense scale of his persuasive ambition.⁵⁸⁰ Thought, as Mallock aptly put it, had been 'the origin' of Hyndman's 'fanaticism', and he expected the same allegiance to 'scientific' candour to

⁵⁷⁶ See Royle, *Radicals, Secularists, and Republicans*, pp. 232-239; and Shipley, *Club Life and Socialism*, pp. 33-41.

⁵⁷⁷ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 4.

⁵⁷⁸ 'Bradlaugh', Hyndman wrote, 'was an Individualist of Individualists' who 'never lost a chance of speaking against Socialism'. *Record*, pp. 316, 317.

⁵⁷⁹ The showdown with Bradlaugh and his acolytes came the following year in the public debate conducted between the two men in the St. James Hall.

⁵⁸⁰ Cole, *History of Socialist Thought*, p. 411.

be true of others too.⁵⁸¹ Far better in that case to take on the most prominent political voices, recognisable to all, than to pore over more insular disputes. Moreover, in prosecuting that plan Hyndman was less insensitive to the political predilections of the popular Radical section of his audience than is often implied. Richard Cobden and John Bright were indeed doubtlessly given no quarter. But, as we shall presently see, George and Mill were treated with overt generosity.⁵⁸²

In November 1878 *The Nineteenth Century* published an article entitled, 'National Insurance: A Cheap, Practical, and Popular Means of Abolishing Poor Rates'. Its author, W. L. Blackley, fretted about the unintended connotations of the title: 'its very sound may induce most readers', he wrote, 'to pass it over as a matter so extravagant, impracticable, and Utopian, as to be unworthy of serious consideration.'⁵⁸³ He need not have worried – for events had 'moved quickly in England'.⁵⁸⁴ There was a great deal more now to feel concerned over for Individualists of a particularly austere persuasion than a scheme of national insurance whereby improvident workers were goaded into a self-reliant condition by compulsory means. The appearance of Wallace, the traction gained by

⁵⁸¹ Mallock, 'England for All', p. 355. Hence the optimistic flurry of correspondence that ensued following the DF's formation. In addition to Smith, Hyndman also initiated correspondence with Toynbee and Foxwell in the hope of converting them to the cause. See Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 300; and Winch, *Wealth and Life*, p. 268.

⁵⁸² In *England for All* Hyndman also spoke generously of Bright. He conceded there that, despite the fact that Bright had opposed the Factory Acts, he was 'a man surely distinguished for his humanity in general concerns'. *England for All*, p. 55. But in *The Historical Basis*, Hyndman adopted a new tack. He criticised both Cobden and Bright sharply, and sought to arouse their 'dazed worshipers to the truth, or enable them to see dimly through the halo of falsity wherewith' their eloquence had 'robed around' them. Bright's humanity was now depicted as a pose. *Historical Basis*, p. 171.

⁵⁸³ W. L. Blackley, 'National Insurance: A Cheap, Practical, and Popular Means of Abolishing Poor Rates', *The Nineteenth Century*, 4/21 (Nov. 1878), p. 834.

⁵⁸⁴ Mallock, 'England for All', p. 356.

George, the shape that English Radicalism had assumed under Chamberlain and Morley, as well as the DF's arrival on the political scene, meant that English society could be compared in 1883, in Mallock's equation, 'to a house that is full of exceedingly inflammable materials'; hitherto unaffected, the country was now suffused with 'a spirit of social revolution'.⁵⁸⁵ In that context, utopia would seem like an inappropriate referent for Blackley's modest proposition, when, that is, genuinely utopian proposals had been drafted.

The purpose of Mallock's article was to take these dissident theories to task. Above all, however, he sought to discredit the doctrine of modern Socialism as purportedly represented by Hyndman. Mallock concentrated his attack on Hyndman because, he argued, unlike the English Radicals who irresponsibly disposed of political economy as and when it seemed opportune to do so, 'the leading Socialists of the day' indulged 'in no such silly bravado'.⁵⁸⁶ 'Political Economy', he wrote, 'is the very thing that they do care for', and for that reason the economic theories of Socialism contained more than just a semblance of plausibility.⁵⁸⁷ Owing to the fact that aspects of the 'old science' had been 'appropriated by the new', 'its falsehood' was 'apparent only on near inspection'.⁵⁸⁸

'The real leaders of the Socialistic movement', Mallock argued, approached the subject of social change, 'in the first place, as *savants* rather than philanthropists'.⁵⁸⁹ They professed 'to stand or fall not on passion but on proof'.⁵⁹⁰ To disprove the economic theory upon which the movement rested was therefore to negate it. Hence, in an effort to achieve that

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 358.

⁵⁸⁶ Mallock, 'England for All', p. 355.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 358.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 355.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

objective – i.e. to cut the ground from under the embryonic Socialist movement – Mallock isolated two doctrines on the truth of which, he held, every modern revolutionary system depended for speculative justification. The first of these was ‘the doctrine that, apart from the raw materials of nature, labour is the sole cause of wealth.’⁵⁹¹ The second was the notion ‘that the land of any given country belongs of right to the people of that country collectively.’⁵⁹² To attribute that second doctrine to Hyndman was misleading. It functioned primarily as a rhetorical ploy, permitting Mallock to deal with George under the guise of dealing with Hyndman only.⁵⁹³ But the first doctrine that Mallock set out to refute did indeed cut to the quick of Hyndman’s Socialist schema. Between that, then, and the personal nature of Mallock’s polemic, the article demanded some sort of recognisable response. Hyndman acknowledged it therefore in the preface to *The Historical Basis*, disingenuously stating that the criticism had ‘been fully met, by anticipation’.⁵⁹⁴

The crux of Mallock’s assault on Hyndman’s retelling of Marx’s economic theory hung on the contention that ‘all wealth is demonstrably not due to labour’.⁵⁹⁵ It is due, rather, he argued, to two things: ‘to machinery, and to the *direction* of labour.’⁵⁹⁶ Machinery, according to Mallock, varied the value of labour, but he did not press the point. He concentrated, instead, on explaining how the ‘*direction* or *organisation* of labour’ formed ‘the real heart of the matter’.⁵⁹⁷ It was admitted by Marx and Hyndman, he started, that division of labour increases production. But

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., p. 361.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

⁵⁹³ Indeed, Mallock literally substituted George for Hyndman, arguing that ‘Mr George... says better than Mr. Hyndman what Mr. Hyndman means’. Mallock, ‘England for All’, p. 366.

⁵⁹⁴ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. x.

⁵⁹⁵ Mallock, ‘England for All’, p. 387.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 388.

what they did not grasp was what caused that division. 'One would imagine, from the manner in which Mr. Hyndman speaks about it,' he wrote, 'that somehow or other it had taken place spontaneously, in accordance with some natural impulse on the part of the labourer'.⁵⁹⁸ 'Of the real truth of the matter', he continued, 'neither Hyndman nor any of his instructors seem... to have had the smallest glimmering. They seem never to have suspected that in the advance of civilisation the division of labour will not take care of itself'.⁵⁹⁹ Moreover, they were just as credulous when it came to accounting for inventions and the transmission of knowledge. Again, 'To judge from the language of Mr. Hyndman,' Mallock persisted, 'one would think that it was as easy a thing to have invented the steam-engine as to file the head of a nut, or to plane the surface of a slide-valve; and that it was as much a matter of indifference who was the engineer of a railway as who turned the first sod with a spade.'⁶⁰⁰ Mallock had already experimented with formulas elsewhere to illustrate the true source of wealth.⁶⁰¹ But here, he arrived at a stable conclusion: 'the rapid growth of wealth', he argued, 'has been the creation, not of the labour of many, but of the intellect, the ingenuity, and the perseverance of the few'.⁶⁰²

Notwithstanding his claim to the contrary, Hyndman's rebuttal of Mallock was tailored to meet these charges. He deployed two strategies to achieve this. The first of those strategies was simply to deny the cogency of Mallock's case. Resorting to evasion rather than detailed retort, Hyndman issued a series of vague references to 'the long, general, never-ending progress of human society'.⁶⁰³ Both the division of labour and human

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 389.

⁶⁰¹ See Mallock, 'Civilization and Equality', pp. 661-663.

⁶⁰² Mallock, 'England for All', p. 389.

⁶⁰³ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 99.

inventions of various kinds were ‘due to small advances,’ he argued, ‘which together contributed to the general movement of mankind’.⁶⁰⁴ Some ‘lucky individuals may be honoured for the last crowning bit of work’, but mankind ‘hangs together from generation to generation; easy labour is but inherited skill; great discoveries and inventions are worked up to by the efforts of myriads ere the goal is reached.’⁶⁰⁵ If Hyndman’s response generally entailed the substitution of assertion for argument, here he sidestepped Mallock’s challenge completely. For he did not address the distinction laid down by Mallock that whereas manual skill ‘developed and dies with each generation that possesses it’, ‘the knowledge of the men by whom labour is directed’ is progressive – unlike the labourers, they ‘begin exactly where their fathers ended.’⁶⁰⁶ The second strategy that Hyndman deployed was more convincing. For Mallock, given the nature of wealth production as he described it, its proceeds were overwhelmingly in the right hands. To this, Hyndman countered, firstly, that there could be no ‘pretence’ that the wealthy inhabitants of the ‘great lounge towns’ that had grown up in the second half of the century did anything to “organise” labour’.⁶⁰⁷ But second, turning now to his other strategy, Hyndman issued an imminent critique of Mallock’s position: after illuminating the anarchy that resided in production, and its attendant social ills, ‘this’, he averred, ‘is the organisation of labour for which the labourers are asked to pay and be thankful for; this,’ he avowed again, ‘is the skilful management of production which the capitalist class and their hangers-on make a merit of’.⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 100.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 99, 100.

⁶⁰⁶ Mallock, ‘England for All’, p. 389.

⁶⁰⁷ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, pp. 274-275.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 249. For further discussion see Ford, ‘W.H. Mallock and Socialism in England’, pp. 328-332. Mallock also re-rehearsed some of these themes in four

Needless to say, if Mallock pursued the above-named point at the greatest length, he was by no means alone among contemporary critics of Socialism in making it. In his 'Reply to the Manifesto of the Democratic Federation', Smith, for example, also derided the claim that 'all wealth is due to labour'.⁶⁰⁹ 'The single invention of Watt – the steam-engine,' he alleged, 'has added more to the wealth of this country than a million pair of hands could do.'⁶¹⁰ Like Mallock, Smith complained that the Socialist formulation failed to acknowledge the intelligence and the skill of the employing classes. 'It would be just as sensible for the hands and feet to complain that the head was a useless member because it did not walk or dig, as to say that mere hand labour was the only source of wealth.'⁶¹¹

Smith, furthermore, added two additional points that Mallock did not broach in his article. He asserted, on the one hand, that 'the cause of the poverty of great numbers of distressed people' was 'largely the result of moral causes' – 'intemperance, and the want of thrift and forethought' – and could be cured, in consequence, only 'by moral means aided by wise legislation'.⁶¹² On the other hand, Smith contended that there was, nonetheless, another cause of poverty that 'no human laws can deal with': namely, the tendency to over-population.⁶¹³ 'The fact is', he wrote, 'the laws of political economy, like those of nature, are inexorable'.⁶¹⁴ Not only did

articles published in the March, May, August, and October 1887 editions of the *Fortnightly Review*. Hyndman issued a rejoinder in the same periodical. H. M. Hyndman, 'Wealth and Ability. A Rejoinder', *Fortnightly Review*, 42/251 (Nov. 1887), pp. 636-648.

⁶⁰⁹ Samuel Smith, *The Fallacies of Socialism Exposed. Being a Reply to the Manifesto of the Democratic Federation* (London, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co, 1885), p. 5.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁶¹² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

they not permit State intervention in the trade and labour market, as proposed in the DF's manifesto, but 'where there is no check to population, through the difficulty of obtaining subsistence,' the ineffectuality and unintended consequences of wage hikes and other infringements of the principle of freedom of contract would be compounded by something even more disagreeable: the people, Smith argued, would soon 'die in millions by famine.'⁶¹⁵

In the opening passage of his review-article, Mallock bemoaned the state of disrepair of orthodox political economy. Echoing Walter Bagehot's notorious statement – that 'It lies rather dead in the public mind' – he wondered just how many 'members of the upper and middle classes' would 'be able to indicate why and where' exactly the modern Socialist theories were false.⁶¹⁶ On that score, in the specific case of Smith, Mallock clearly had no reason to worry. Indeed, so far from disregarding 'the dismal science', Smith reduced it to its purest, most dogmatic form. He had not heard, plainly, that 'the long and bitter controversy between economists and human beings' had ended.⁶¹⁷ Nor, evidently, that the latter had in fact won. As Toynbee, the author of that locution, put it in the first of his lectures on *Progress and Poverty*: 'The economist now dares to say that the end of his practical science is not wealth, but man; and further, he owns that his intellectual theories have also undergone a vast change.'⁶¹⁸ To be sure, the problem of distribution remained a thorny one, according to Toynbee. But the explanation framed at the beginning of the century by Malthus, James Mill, and David Ricardo for 'the misery which they saw

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

⁶¹⁶ Walter Bagehot, *The Postulates of English Political Economy* (New York & London, G. P. Putnam's & Sons, 1885), p. 4. Mallock, 'England for All', p. 354.

⁶¹⁷ Toynbee, "*Progress and Poverty*", p. 7.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

before them', an explanation 'which denied hope to the human race', had doubtlessly run out of steam.⁶¹⁹ The economist, Toynbee continued,

has learnt to recognise that the laws which he supposed were universal are often only partial and provisional; he has learnt to recognise that the method which he uses with such confidence – the method of abstract deduction – is a most dangerous one; that it can be used only by men who know that at every step they have to question their premises, and that at every step they have to test their conclusions by experience. Last of all, he recognises that the vast problems which we all now see are looming upon us cannot be solved by rash and hasty statements, but only by patient and vigilant science. He recognises that to solve the problem of to-day we must go back far into the past.⁶²⁰

Toynbee's reappraisal of political economy was by no means representative. But it dealt a serious blow, at any rate, to those like Smith and Mallock who still believed in the inexorability of certain economic laws posited by a handful of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century thinkers. Moreover, in the lectures that he delivered on George's book, Toynbee also inadvertently formulated answers to Smith's, once ubiquitous, but now increasingly outmoded, remarks on the causes of poverty. Impressed by Toynbee's analysis, they formed, in turn, the starting-point for the response to Smith that Hyndman deposited in *The Historical Basis*.

In the first place, in contrast to the moral dichotomy that Smith outlined – the distinction between temperate and intemperate workers – Toynbee's understanding of what constituted poverty was decidedly more expansive. He drew attention to what he termed the 'more refined form of suffering' that typified the lives of the multitude in Britain.⁶²¹ That suffering may not have taken an acutely physical form since 1846, when the repeal of the Corn Laws ensured a constant provision of cheap bread. But it was no

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

⁶²⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

⁶²¹ Ibid., p. 5.

less real for its spatial and temporal relativity. It was the suffering, Toynbee explained, of men and women in stable employment, the suffering of men and women whose labour, despite its intensity and lack of intellectual reward, ‘cannot obtain for them even a whole house as a home, nor the decent enjoyments of life, nor the certainty of an honourable old age.’⁶²² Worst of all, however, it was a form of suffering that was entirely avoidable.

Contrary to the opinion of his doctrinaire opponents, Toynbee insisted that the untrammelled pursuit of economic self-interest was not an unalloyed good. Its results, rather, were distinctly mixed. The relationship between employer and labourer was characterised by an imbalance of power, which enabled the former to ‘practically dictate terms’ to the latter.⁶²³ But it need not be so. While competition resembled a ‘physical force’ presiding benignly over the operation of supply and demand in, say, the grain market, it was not, like a force of nature, unalterable.⁶²⁴ ‘Man’, Toynbee argued, ‘is pliable, and pliable to great ideas of justice.’⁶²⁵ The level of suffering borne by the labourers was ‘in the will of the employer’ to decide.⁶²⁶ Consequently, a better division of wealth was indeed possible. But to realise it, it presupposed ‘a passionate devotion to the community’ on the part of the middle classes hitherto absent.⁶²⁷

In addition to his largely structural account of poverty, and the moral inversion that he effected, Toynbee also dismissed, secondly, the idea that Malthus’s doctrine of population had any ongoing relevance for the situation in late-nineteenth century Britain. Whereas Mill maintained that ‘the tendency to over-population is a fact which Communism, as well as the

⁶²² Ibid., pp. 5-6.

⁶²³ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶²⁴ Ibid., pp. 22-23.

⁶²⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., p. 42.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., pp. 24-25.

existing society, would have to deal with', Toynbee argued that, 'It, like the whole of the English school of thought, was the product of a peculiar and disastrous time.'⁶²⁸ The circumstances that fostered its growth – namely, 'bad harvests year after year, with a great war all through Europe' – no longer obtained.⁶²⁹ There was therefore no reason to continue to cleave to it as a precept at present: 'we need not trust, as the old economists did,' he wrote, 'to checks on population... or improvements in the condition of the workpeople; but we may trust to the organised work of the community, which will slowly lift them to a higher place.'⁶³⁰

Toynbee, in other words, relativised Malthusianism. He also complicated, as his reference to 'improvements in the condition of the workpeople' indicates, some of the moral categories promoted by middle-class champions of the scheme of national insurance devised by Blackley – that is, middle-class social reformers like Smith. In keeping with the Mazzinian theme of communal duty that formed one of the cornerstones of his work, Toynbee argued that what had been overlooked in these suggestions was 'the fact that thrift may often brutalize a man as much as drink.'⁶³¹ Toynbee warned how 'a man may make huge efforts to save and to raise himself, and so become narrow and selfish and careless of his fellow-men.'⁶³² What was needed was not encouragement of a socially injurious and practically unreasonable kind of self-reliance, but rather 'help towards doing without help' in the form of a modest extension of the State to protect

⁶²⁸ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 250. Toynbee, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 31.

⁶²⁹ Ibid.

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

⁶³¹ Ibid., p. 52.

⁶³² Ibid. For Toynbee's use of Mazzini see 'Are Radicals Socialists?', p. 237.

vulnerable workers and promote the quality of life of the community at large.⁶³³

If Toynbee provided inadvertent answers to Smith's account of causation, Hyndman's response to the arguments elucidated in Smith's letter was necessarily esoteric, insofar as Smith had not yet published its content as *The Fallacies of Socialism Exposed*. However, in replying to Smith's charges, Hyndman was killing two birds with one stone. His utterances applied as much to Bradlaugh and Besant and other unreconstructed Liberals as they did to their intended target. As we have already heard, here as elsewhere in the book, Hyndman took his lead from Toynbee's lectures on George. He, too, considered poverty as primarily a structural phenomenon. In its modern incarnation it was simply the unfortunate, but time-limited, upshot of those presently at the sharp end of the class struggle.

For this belief, of course, Hyndman had no need of Toynbee. That much he gleaned from Engels and Marx. Hyndman had no need of Toynbee either for the conclusion that drink was for the most part the consequence of poverty as opposed to its cause. But he did borrow Toynbee's turn of phrase, somewhat more emphatically put, that personal thrift was 'but a low form of selfishness.'⁶³⁴ More significantly, though, Hyndman rehashed in *The Historical Basis* both the synoptic history of the 'controversy between economists and human beings' that Toynbee laid out in his lectures, as well as Toynbee's description of the defining economic characteristics of the era.

⁶³³ Ibid., p. 236.

⁶³⁴ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 396.

Firstly, Hyndman reproduced Toynbee's narrative that the epoch of the industrial revolution gave birth to a 'clique of economical fanatics', men 'like Malthus and Chalmers, and Ricardo, and James Mill', who 'got hold of the machine of legislation and drove it completely over the interests of the mass of the people'.⁶³⁵ Like Toynbee, he isolated John Stuart Mill as the single exception, the one economist who did reveal 'a deep sympathy with the people'.⁶³⁶ But, like Toynbee, too, Hyndman asserted that Mill was still culpable of considerable blindness.⁶³⁷ Above all, Mill was guilty, on Hyndman's reading, of clinging to the superannuated 'views of the Malthusian school', views which had been 'accepted more or less completely by the leading English economists of the bourgeois school to-day'.⁶³⁸ Indeed, in this regard, 'Mill, Fawcett, and Rogers, Walker and Sidgwick' provided 'a remarkable instance of the complete incapacity of men who are brought up with certain set theories, to cast them aside and think for themselves'.⁶³⁹ As Toynbee himself remarked of Malthus's doctrine of population: 'after a time the crisis passed away, although the theories which had grown up in the brief moment of agony dominated our thought for half-a-century'.⁶⁴⁰ Even 'wise men' were capable of simplicity of explanation, he noted, particularly 'when they are not in contact with those who suffer'.⁶⁴¹ Hyndman and Toynbee were at one in the belief that the 'Malthusian theory in the present condition' – in the more forceful language of the former – was 'utterly misleading and foolish'.⁶⁴²

⁶³⁵ Ibid., p. 385.

⁶³⁶ Ibid., p. 253.

⁶³⁷ Ibid.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., p. 387.

⁶³⁹ Ibid., pp. 387, 390.

⁶⁴⁰ Toynbee, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 31.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., p. 27.

⁶⁴² Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 390.

Naturally, much of Hyndman's critique of Malthusianism was derived, not from Toynbee, whose utterances on the subject were, in any case, only fleeting, but from Engels and Marx. It was no accident that Hyndman should have held Toynbee in such high regard in the first instance, given their mutual affinity for Marx's writings. But Hyndman dismissed the Malthusian theory of over-population for two separate reasons, one inspired chiefly by the former, and the other inspired by the latter pair.

Firstly, taking up Smith's claim that, 'where there is no check to population... it doubles every twenty-five years', Hyndman complained – à la Toynbee – about the 'wholly unscientific metaphysical manner' of proceeding, which proclaimed 'as true a tendency which, among the well-to-do of our existing society does not exist,' and 'which, therefore, may be entirely changed by a new order of things, and which cannot be worth consideration, even if true, for some ages'.⁶⁴³ More importantly, however, Hyndman – following Engels and Marx – put machinery at the centre of his second reason for disregarding Malthus. The 'effect of the machine', he argued, 'is constantly to throw men out of employment, and to create, under existing conditions of production, a permanent over-population, in the face of increasing wealth.'⁶⁴⁴ Under these circumstances, the workers were emphatically not the authors of their own fate. 'The tendency of our system of production', he averred – the tendency for constant capital to increase proportionately over its variable counterpart – 'is of necessity to increase the amount of over-population relatively to the means of employment'.⁶⁴⁵ An 'industrial army of reserve is maintained', he continued, 'ever at the disposal of capital for the enhancement of profit, ready to be absorbed into

⁶⁴³ Smith, *Fallacies of Socialism*, p. 13. Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 391.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

the whirl of production during times of expansion, only to be thrown workless on to the streets in periods of collapse.’⁶⁴⁶

For Hyndman, then, the evidence did not suggest, firstly, that an expansion of population was the necessary corollary of an increase in wealth. Secondly, the surplus population extant under a capitalist mode of production was generated by that mode of production itself. Even if it did transpire, in the event, that life was in fact ‘a mad race between population and wealth’, wealth was in any case ultimately destined to triumph.⁶⁴⁷ For once machinery had been harnessed for the needs of the community – in contrast to its present role as a device to satisfy the inordinate wants of the few at the expense of the many – wealth, he insisted, would ‘be made as plentiful as water’.⁶⁴⁸ The conflict between the relations of production and the productive forces would resolve itself in Socialism, in a society, that is, where the collective exploitation of new technologies like electricity would quickly usher in the economy of superabundance imagined by Engels and Marx.

Moreover, the logic of concentration that ostensibly formed the prelude to that process had, as Toynbee recognised, already taken hold. ‘As Karl Marx and other writers have pointed out,’ he wrote,

gradually large industries are stamping out, or rather, large businesses are stamping out, smaller ones. Gradually capital is being accumulated in fewer and fewer hands, until at last some think we

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid. See John M. Sherwood, ‘Engels, Marx, Malthus, and the Machine’, *The American Historical Review*, 90/4 (1985), pp. 837-865; and Daniel C. S. Wilson, ‘Arnold Toynbee and the Industrial Revolution: The Science of History, Political Economy, and the Machine Past’, *History and Memory*, 26/2 (2014), pp. 133-161.

⁶⁴⁷ Toynbee, “*Progress and Poverty*”, p. 7. For an analysis of this late-century turn away from Malthus, touching on many of the thinkers dealt with here, see Gareth Stedman Jones, *An End to Poverty? A Historical Debate* (London, Profile, 2004), Ch. 6.

⁶⁴⁸ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 469.

shall have nothing but a handful of stupendous monopolists, with a struggling mass of labourers at their feet.⁶⁴⁹

Yet, while Toynbee was ready to proclaim 'the era of free trade and free contract' over, he was not ready to submit to Hyndman's view that competition had proven both 'historically and actually' a failure.⁶⁵⁰ The 'era of administration' may have arrived, but it did not entail a sharp break with the status quo. It entailed just a better distribution of wealth.⁶⁵¹ Nonetheless, despite their discordant conclusions, Hyndman shadowed Toynbee's analysis of what he called the 'law of larger capitals' as it applied to such issues as co-operation and land reform.⁶⁵² Indeed, Hyndman's greatest debt to Toynbee resided in his survey of George's proposals on precisely the latter score.

In refuting George's proposals in *The Historical Basis*, Hyndman took his lead from Toynbee's fraternal, but ideologically unsympathetic, review of *Progress and Poverty*, rather than from Marx's hostile stance. Unlike Marx, Toynbee described George's book in admiring tones. In addition to the 'acute dialectic and splendid declamation' it revealed, *Progress and Poverty* merited praise, on Toynbee's view, for the author's 'keen sympathy with the people'.⁶⁵³ Marx, by contrast, described it to Hyndman as the 'Capitalists' last ditch'.⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁴⁹ Toynbee, "Progress and Poverty", p. 22.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 23. Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 447.

⁶⁵¹ Toynbee, "Progress and Poverty", p. 23.

⁶⁵² Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 446.

⁶⁵³ Toynbee, "Progress and Poverty", p. 8.

⁶⁵⁴ Hyndman, *Record*, p. 281. Marx repeated the slur in a letter to Sorge. Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 323. For the changing reception of George among Socialists in Britain see Peter D. A. Jones, 'Henry George and British Socialism', *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 47/4 (1988), pp. 474-491; and Elwood P. Lawrence, 'Uneasy Alliance: The Reception of Henry George by British Socialists in the Eighties', *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 11/1 (1951), pp. 61-74.

Like Marx, though, Toynbee insisted that George had ‘promulgated errors’, errors which he held ‘to be fundamentally dangerous’.⁶⁵⁵ Seeing ‘how much wrong economists have done in the past by false theories,’ he wrote, ‘I will not sacrifice my intellectual conscience by supporting a fair, but delusive panacea.’⁶⁵⁶ Indeed, on the most crucial points, Toynbee’s appraisal of George’s scheme converged with Marx’s. He, too, regarded George as ‘a child of David Ricardo’.⁶⁵⁷ Toynbee also mirrored Marx in suggesting that, George’s land tax represented not a solution to the current inequitable distribution of wealth in society, but the completion rather of capitalist production in its most nefarious form:

Mr George does not propose to touch the large farm system. He says the large farm system is due to a law of economic development, with which he will not meddle. But as long as vast accumulators of capital continue to deal thus ruthlessly with their human instruments, what good will the confiscation of rent do? The evil in this case plainly is not the ownership of land in large quantities, which is all that Mr George would prevent, but its tenure in large quantities, which he would allow.⁶⁵⁸

Like Hyndman before him in *England for All*, Toynbee objected to the one-sidedness of George’s solution. ‘If we look at it closely,’ he argued, ‘we shall find that this is but one typical form of a universal and urgent problem. It is not only in farms and in agriculture that great businesses are being formed, or have been formed, but in industry and manufactures’ too.⁶⁵⁹ On this point, there was unanimity between Marx, Toynbee, and

⁶⁵⁵ Toynbee, “*Progress and Poverty*”, p. 8.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid. Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 322.

⁶⁵⁸ Toynbee, “*Progress and Poverty*”, p. 21. Marx wrote: ‘All these ‘socialists’... have this in common – they allow *wage labour* and hence also *capitalist production* to subsist, while endeavouring to delude themselves and the world into believing that the transformation of rent into a taxation paid to the State must bring about the automatic disappearance of *all the abuses* of capitalist production. So the whole thing is merely an attempt, tricked out with socialism, to *save capitalist regime* and, indeed, to *re-establish it on an even broader basis* than at present.’ *Collected Works*. Vol. 46, p. 101.

⁶⁵⁹ Toynbee, “*Progress and Poverty*”, pp. 21-22.

Hyndman. They were all agreed that, 'it is quite ridiculous', as the latter put it,

to talk of the landlord as the sole and particular cause of the distressed condition of the mass of our agricultural population; still more foolish to argue that the exaction of rent for land is the chief cause of the sad condition of the mass of the workers in our great cities. If agricultural and ground rents were taken by the State tomorrow, the main difficulties of our social problems would be almost as far from solution as ever.⁶⁶⁰

That said, Toynbee went much further than Marx in explaining just where George had gone wrong. Whereas Marx dismissed in broad-brush terms the 'socialist panacea' that George set out, Toynbee, by contrast, calculated, firstly, the revenue that State confiscation of the 'unearned increment' could expect to obtain, and he attempted, second, to debunk Ricardo's theory of rent upon which George's doctrine was largely based.⁶⁶¹ Hyndman followed suit on both counts.

Taking Toynbee's analysis as a model, Hyndman also disregarded Ricardo's theory of rent, aping Toynbee's argument that the law of diminishing returns simply did not stand up.⁶⁶² He also deployed Toynbee's figure of £60,000,000 to demonstrate the relative paucity of competition rents.⁶⁶³ More important than the sum, however, was the fact that such a policy should 'put a great burden on one class alone'.⁶⁶⁴ The capitalists, 'who will be relieved of taxation to a large amount themselves, and who, on the taxation of the workers being lessened, would reduce wages on the average by the amount of such remittance', would ultimately be the only class to gain in George's ill-thought-out scenario.⁶⁶⁵ What was needed, Hyndman argued, was not the mere confiscation of competition rents,

⁶⁶⁰ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 300.

⁶⁶¹ Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 322.

⁶⁶² Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 299. Toynbee, "Progress and Poverty", pp. 11-16.

⁶⁶³ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 301. Toynbee, "Progress and Poverty", p. 38.

⁶⁶⁴ Toynbee, "Progress and Poverty", p. 49.

⁶⁶⁵ Hyndman, *Historical Basis*, p. 301.

‘without reference to the surrounding economical conditions of the people’, but the ‘complete reorganisation of production and exchange between town and country’.⁶⁶⁶ Here, at least, then, Hyndman’s survey exceeded Toynbee’s, insofar as the latter settled for a graduated income tax applicable to landowners and capitalists alike.

In the light of what has been said in Chapter 2, it goes without saying that neither Hyndman’s proposal nor Toynbee’s could expect to gain the support of Fawcett. In his *Macmillan’s Magazine* article, Fawcett, likewise, objected to George’s scheme. But he did so, needless to say, for different reasons. Paradoxically, though, Fawcett shared Hyndman’s and Toynbee’s concern about the inequity of confiscating the ‘unearned increment’ on land alone. If ‘the state’, he complained, ‘in prosperous times appropriates an increase in value, and if in adverse times the falling-off in value has to be borne by the owner, land would at once have a disability attached to it which belongs to no other property.’⁶⁶⁷ It was not only the question of land that concerned him, however. In what was essentially one last throw of the dice, in ‘State Socialism and the Nationalisation of the Land’, Fawcett reiterated, in finer detail, owing to the proliferation of State interventionist schemes, the criticisms he issued five years earlier in the *Fortnightly Review*. This time around, however, instead of drawing sustenance from Fawcett’s comments, Hyndman responded antagonistically. The precise nature of Hyndman’s response is not important. But it would be true to say that, by 1883, Fawcett was indeed the ‘brave defender of a lost cause’, in a way that was not strictly true of him in 1878. A spirit of revolution may not exactly have been afoot

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 302, 304.

⁶⁶⁷ Henry Fawcett, ‘State Socialism and the Nationalisation of the Land’, *Macmillan’s Magazine*, 48/285 (Jul. 1883), p. 186.

as Mallock suggested; but Blackley could certainly rest assured that the prospect of his proposals being disregarded as utopian was increasingly unlikely.

Unscientific Socialism

In *The Historical Basis*, Hyndman associated the work of Marx and Engels with that of the German Historical School. Strictly speaking, he was wrong to do so. Despite a superficial resemblance – i.e. the shared emphasis on historicism in their respective economic theories – there was no formal connection between them, and the political aspirations of the former pair were clearly ill-matched with the modest reforming commitments of the so-called Socialists of the Chair.⁶⁶⁸ Nonetheless, Hyndman was not the only British intellectual impressed by Marx's work to commit that error. In his first essay on Socialism, Karl Pearson also listed Marx among the leading *Kathedersozialisten*, next to Adolf Held, Adolph Wagner, and Albert Schäffle.⁶⁶⁹ In fact, mutual misapprehension of Marx's intellectual heritage was not the only thing that these British intellectuals had in common. At the same time as Hyndman had begun to visit Marx's home in Hampstead, Pearson had also begun to correspond with Marx after having become familiar with his work during a period of study at the universities of Heidelberg and Berlin. In a letter dated 9 February 1881, Pearson even proposed to Marx that he translate *Das Kapital*.⁶⁷⁰ Of course, Marx did not

⁶⁶⁸ See, for example, John Rae's useful contemporaneous exposition: 'The Socialists of the Chair', *Contemporary Review*, 39 (Feb. 1881), pp. 232-248. For more recent accounts see Yuichi Shionoya (ed.), *The German Historical School. The Historical and Ethical Approach to Economics* (London, Routledge, 2001); Eric Grimmer-Solem, *The Rise of Historical Economics and Social Reform in Germany 1864-1894* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2003); and Keith Tribe, *Strategies of Economic Order. German Economic Discourse, 1750-1950* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), Ch. 4.

⁶⁶⁹ Theodore M. Porter, *Karl Pearson. The Scientific Life in a Statistical Age* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 78.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 77. For Pearson, in addition to Porter's book, see Bernard Semmel, 'Karl Pearson: Socialist and Darwinist', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 9/2 (1958), pp.

accept Pearson's proposal. The door was thus left open for Hyndman to begin his own unauthorised translation, in 1884, in *To-day*.

By that time Pearson was known to the other Socialists receptive to Marx in Britain. Indeed, in announcing his adhesion to a 'new school' of Socialism distinct from that inspired by Marx, Pearson provoked the wrath of Bax.⁶⁷¹ Bax responded to Pearson's assault on 'Revolutionary Socialism' in an article published in *Commonweal*. It was reprinted in *The Religion of Socialism*, the only other book-length exposition of modern Socialism, besides Hyndman's *Historical Basis*, to have been written, to date, by a member of the Socialist movement.⁶⁷² The article is revealing for two reasons. On the one hand, it illuminates the trajectory that Bax had taken since 1881, where we left him in Chapter 4. On the other, it indicates his central preoccupations. It provides, therefore, a useful starting-point to explore Bax's more mature Socialist thought.

In 1884, the SDF underwent a split.⁶⁷³ It resulted in the formation of the Socialist League. Thenceforth, Bax and Hyndman were divided by

111-125; and the scattered remarks in Livesey's account of Olive Schreiner in *Socialism, Sex, and the Culture of Aestheticism*, Ch. 3.

⁶⁷¹ Karl Pearson, 'The Enthusiasm of the Market-Place and of the Study', in *The Ethic of Freethought and Other Addresses and Essays* (London, Adam and Charles Black, 1903), p. 117.

⁶⁷² Speaking of the publication of *Fabian Essays* thirty years after the event, Sidney Webb wrote: 'At the present day (1919), when almost a majority of the publications dealing with Political Science bear a Socialist imprint; and almost more is predicated about the Organization of the Socialist State of the Future than is revealed about the Capitalist Organization of today, it is hard to realize the extent of our innovation. There was available, in 1889, to the English reader, apart from the various manifestoes of the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League, principally by William Morris, Ernest Belfort Bax, and Henry Mayers Hyndman, with a dozen or so pamphlets by these and other writers, little else than Hyndman's *England for All* (1881) and *Historical Basis of Socialism* (1883) and a volume of essays by Bax, *The Religion of Socialism*. 'Introduction to the 1920 reprint', in Shaw (ed.), *Fabian Essays*, p. 271.

⁶⁷³ The best historical account of the schism is given by Bevir in *Making of British Socialism*, Ch. 6. While it does not challenge the misconceptions surrounding Hyndman, it does succeed in establishing a role for the ordinary members of the

conflicting allegiances to those organisations. The former occupied a position on the Provisional Council of the newly-founded body. The latter, meanwhile, continued to play a key role in the SDF. That, however, did not stop Bax from coming to Hyndman's aid when Pearson characterized him as the titular 'man of the market-place' in the above-mentioned lecture. Pearson characterised Hyndman as a political actor motivated chiefly by ignorance and blind feeling, as opposed to the reason exercised by his (self-referential) ideal-typical counterpart, the 'man of the study'. Pearson had not retracted his Socialist views. Nor had he disowned his earlier admiration of Marx's *Capital*.⁶⁷⁴ But he did insist, in contrast to Hyndman, that Socialism (which he envisaged in decidedly Statist terms, and which he viewed as 'the logical outcome of the law of Malthus') must be delivered gradually and by means of moral education.⁶⁷⁵

To Pearson's contemptuous treatment of Hyndman, Bax replied in kind. He argued that:

Mr Pearson, whether he intended it or not, has stated a specious case for the nice young man fresh from the university, who shudders at the "coarseness" inseparable from a real working class movement, and prefers the attitude of missionary of culture to the benighted proletarian heathen to that of his co-worker in the cause of social emancipation and in the hurrying on of that class-struggle which is its necessary condition.⁶⁷⁶

The 'gospel of "sweet reasonableness"' propounded by Pearson and others cut no ice with Bax.⁶⁷⁷ The swelling ranks of 'moral' reformers were guilty,

SDF who typically shared a political background in popular radicalism. Bax's retrospective explanation of the 'split', meanwhile, put 'personal questions', rather than Hyndman's nominal 'chauvinism', at its core. 'As time showed,' he argued, 'the excuse or reason for the rupture, so far as its theoretical grounds were concerned, was utterly inadequate.' *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, pp. 77, 79.

⁶⁷⁴ Karl Pearson, 'The Moral Basis of Socialism', in *The Ethic of Freethought*, p. 325.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁶⁷⁶ Ernest Belfort Bax, 'The Two Enthusiasms', in *The Religion of Socialism. Being Essays in Modern Socialist Criticism* (London, Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey & Co, 1886), p. 128.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

he held, of treating ethics absolutely, ‘irrespective of such insignificant obstacles as economic conditions and social surroundings.’⁶⁷⁸ They ignored that ‘the intellectual and moral revolution of society rests primarily upon the conditions in which its wealth is produced and distributed.’⁶⁷⁹ The distinction that Pearson created between the ‘study’ and the ‘market-place’ did not stand up. For as soon as the structural supports which held it in place had been removed the distinction would collapse – and, for historical reasons, the ‘market-place’, not the ‘study’, would perform the job of removal.

Clearly, the economic structure of society, or the mode of production, now figured far more prominently in Bax’s thought than it had done at the turn of the decade. In the mental landscape that he now inhabited, Spencer was out and Engels was in. Bax’s rejoinder to Pearson shed light on that transformation. Bax may not have deployed the language of ‘scientific’ Socialism in the article, but his affinity with Engels is plain. What is also clear is Bax’s aversion to the ahistorical view of ethics, which received a new impetus in Britain with the emergence of the ‘Neo-Hegelian school’. Thinking aright about ethics would prove to be an enduring *idée fixe*. So, too, would Bax’s own interest in Hegel. For Hegel’s ‘reading of the riddle of Life and Knowledge’, he wrote in his rejoinder to Pearson, was ‘the least unsatisfactory up to date.’⁶⁸⁰ Certainly, Engels’s contribution to Bax’s intellectual formation following their meeting in 1883 was substantial. But Bax had developed an admiration of Hegel independently. The uses they

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 131.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 134.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 130.

made of Hegel were in fact at odds. Engels, indeed, as we shall see in Chapters 8 and 9, disapproved of Bax's philosophy.⁶⁸¹

By 1895, the year of Engels's death, Bax and Engels were intimately familiar. From 1883 onwards, Bax had been a guest at Engels's Sunday gatherings. On these occasions, Bax kept 'the conversational ball rolling' with his heterodox views.⁶⁸² Combined with study of the relevant published writings, it was also there, in conversation with Engels, that Bax learnt to interpret Marx. Thus, he viewed Marx from that time forward through an Engelsian lens. The personal intimacy enjoyed by Bax and Engels did not, however, translate into its intellectual equivalent. Despite Engels's forecast, Bax did not outgrow his youthful indiscretions. As we shall see in Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11, he cherry-picked, instead, from the developing 'Marxist' oeuvre, taking to heart, in a strongly attenuated form, what was shortly termed 'the materialist doctrine of history', and Engels's observations on 'primitive society'; the rest he disregarded, particularly Engels's positivist anti-philosophy, which he also conflated with Marx.

In the field of political economy – Marx's real preoccupation – Bax developed a competency. But it was not one of his major concerns.⁶⁸³ To be

⁶⁸¹ In a letter to Bebel in 1886, Engels wrote: 'Bax is very talented and understands something – but after the fashion of philosophers has concocted his own form of socialism which he takes for the true Marxist theory and does a lot of damage with it. However, this is an infantile disease in his case and will pass, it is only a pity that this process is being gone through in public.' Quoted in Thompson, *William Morris*, p. 422. Bax's view of Engels's efforts in the field of philosophy are expounded in Chapter 9.

⁶⁸² Bernstein, *My Years in Exile*, p. 202.

⁶⁸³ On the question of competence, Bax, for example, wrote the introduction to a new edition of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* published by Bohn in 1887. He also took the lead in drafting the articles for *Commonweal*, 'Socialism from the Root Up', in 1886 and 1887. As Morris recorded in his diary: 'Tuesday to Bax at Croydon where we did our first article on Marx: or rather he did it: I don't think I should ever make an economist even of the most elementary kind: but I am glad of

sure, Bax was one of the leading participants in the reading circle held at the home of Charlotte Wilson, organised to discuss Marx's *Capital*, known later as the Hampstead Historic Society.⁶⁸⁴ But he left the work of responding to the so-called 'Jevonian Criticism of Marx' that ensued from those meetings up to Shaw and Hyndman.⁶⁸⁵ Bax was more comfortable, intellectually speaking, at the Aristotelian Society, where he first met R. B. Haldane. Bax's friendship with Haldane began in 1882.⁶⁸⁶ The following year, Bax contributed his 'own quota to the dominant philosophical interest' with a translation of Kant's *Prolegomena and Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, preceded by a short biography of Kant.⁶⁸⁷ Then, in 1885, he published his *Handbook to the History of Philosophy*. Shaw, the only other British Socialist to take a genuine interest in philosophy, studied Bax's book.⁶⁸⁸ He and Bax discussed it together, in some detail, at the British Museum Reading Room.

Bax, then, was well-integrated in the various circles interested in intellectual and social change in late-Victorian London. These connections helped to militate against the prospect of being absorbed by Engels's intellectual and political project. However, as his comments on 'nice young' men 'fresh from university' indicate, Bax was no less critical of the other groups of intellectuals with whom he came into contact. On the contrary, Bax was more hostile to the Fabians and the Idealists who, as we shall see in

the opportunity this gives me of hammering some Marx into myself'. Quoted in Thompson, *William Morris*, pp. 752-753.

⁶⁸⁴ For a short discussion of the Hampstead Historic Society see A. M. McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics, 1884-1918* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 30-35; and Pierson, *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism*, pp. 119-130.

⁶⁸⁵ The debate on Marx's theory of value was a long drawn out affair, taking place in the pages of *To-day*. Shaw's initial contribution is cited in fn. 59. His conversion to Wickstead's position is recorded in 'Bluffing the Value Theory', *To-day*, 11/66 (May, 1889), pp. 128-135. Hyndman's contribution was issued the previous month in 'Marx's Theory of Value', *To-day*, 11/65 (Apr. 1889), pp. 94-104.

⁶⁸⁶ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 211.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁶⁸⁸ Cowley, *The Victorian Encounter with Marx*, pp. 51-52.

Chapters 8, 9, and 10, bore the brunt of his ill-natured polemics during the 1880s and 1890s.

By contrast, Bax's refutations of Engels were never bad-tempered. And unlike his altercations with other social reformers outside the revolutionary Socialist movement, his criticism of Engels was almost always esoteric. It was only in the freer environment of the first two decades of the twentieth century, between Engels's death and the consolidation of the Soviet Union, that Bax posited a more candid appraisal. Thus, he conceded in 1918, in his autobiography, that 'Engels had his limitations intellectually'.⁶⁸⁹ Engels's greatest failing was the 'crude and dogmatic materialism' he cleaved to, a failing that Bax also attributed to Marx.⁶⁹⁰ Yet, notwithstanding that, and other intellectual faux pas, Bax showed an uncharacteristic leniency toward his friend. Throughout the 1880s and nineties Bax's loyalty to the custodian of Marx's legacy remained undimmed. He had no qualms, however, about taking broadly sympathetic adversaries to task. If Hyndman, then, gradually descended into a politically inauspicious, doctrinaire mode, Bax remained constant in his obstinacy. He began and finished his career as a Socialist leaving no hostages to fortune.

For example, in an article, symbolically entitled, 'Unscientific Socialism', Bax brushed off the other 'nominally socialistic' ideas that had begun, by 1884, to circulate in Britain. 'In the exposition of a subject such as Socialism,' he wrote,

as in the rebuilding of an edifice, there is a preliminary stage of destructive activity. Old material, in the one case, has to be carted away, and the ground to be generally dug up and cleared. In the other, we have similarly to clear out intellectual ground of theories

⁶⁸⁹ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 45.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 46.

likely to interfere with our contemplated structure. Now, no material is so much in danger of cumbering us as that which superficially resembles our own, but is in reality old and rotten.⁶⁹¹

While Hyndman left his animadversion to the ideas of other social reformers implicit, Bax laboured to bring the various points of discord out into the open. Moreover, given his close acquaintance with the embryonic Socialist intelligentsia and its associates he was peculiarly well-placed to do so.

In the article mentioned above, Bax isolated four ‘codes of ideas’, which comprised, on his view, an ‘unscientific’ block of Socialist thought in Britain.⁶⁹² In so doing, he was of course reproducing Engels’s famous distinction. However, in place of Engels’s straightforward, bifurcated model, ‘utopian’ and ‘scientific’, Bax elaborated a slightly more complicated scheme. As opposed to the dichotomy presented by Engels, Bax set out three further ‘unscientific’ alternatives to ‘socialism proper’, namely Christian Socialism, Sentimental Socialism, and Anarchism.⁶⁹³ Bax, like Engels, regarded each of these alternatives as utopian in the pejorative sense of the term. But he also viewed them as sufficiently distinct to merit a brief discussion of their own. The best part of Bax’s article was devoted to the discussion of Christian Socialism, specifically, to the Guild of St. Mathew, the latest incarnation of that recurrent tradition in British Socialist thought. He did so, however, not because of its influence, which remained

⁶⁹¹ Bax, ‘Unscientific Socialism’, p. 92. ‘Unscientific Socialism’ was first printed in *To-day* in March 1884.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁶⁹³ In its fourfold form, Bax’s typology was closer to that set out in the *Communist Manifesto*. Although the absence of the language of science in the latter text also sets them apart. For a close analysis of the views of Marx and Engels see David Leopold, ‘The Structure of Marx and Engels’ Considered Account of Utopian Socialism’, *History of Political Thought*, 26/3 (2005), pp. 433-466.

negligible, but because the discussion coincided with the topic of moral philosophy.

Bax delivered his critique of Christian Socialism in two parts. In the first part he analysed its ‘economic basis’.⁶⁹⁴ In the second, he assessed the ethical teaching of its ‘titular founder’, Christ.⁶⁹⁵ Bax’s understanding of the current phase of Christian Socialism was impressionistic. He located its ‘practical basis’ in trade co-operation and industrial partnership.⁶⁹⁶ Accuracy aside, however, in conflating the old and the new, Bax was able to settle the score with that old Radical hobby-horse and Liberal panacea, a challenge he sidestepped five years earlier in his first article on Socialism published in *Modern Thought*.

For Mill, as we saw in Chapter 2, co-operation and profit-sharing schemes not only compensated for the anticipated failings of Communism, they also provided relief, he argued, for the worst abuses of the ‘existing constitution of property’.⁶⁹⁷ Bax, by contrast, maintained ‘that all such schemes are not only within the lines of the current *bourgeois* system of ideas, habits, and aspirations, but that they reflect that system in some of its worst aspects.’⁶⁹⁸ That is to say, he posited the very reverse. Following Harrison’s assessment, Bax averred that the ‘trade co-operator canonises the *bourgeois* virtues, but Socialist vices, “over-work,” and “thrift.”’⁶⁹⁹ Far more optimistic than Mill about the potential for transformation of the human character – indeed incomparably so – Bax asserted that the values

⁶⁹⁴ Bax, ‘Unscientific Socialism’, p. 95.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 96.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 93. Bax confounded the new Christian Socialism with the old Christian Socialism of F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, and J. M. Ludlow. There is a chapter dedicated to each of the aforementioned in Norman, *The Victorian Christian Socialists*. For Stuart Headlam see Ch. 6. of the same book.

⁶⁹⁷ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 255.

⁶⁹⁸ Bax, ‘Unscientific Socialism’, p. 93.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 94.

encouraged by those schemes were at odds with a system designed to facilitate the enjoyment of the products of labour. Co-operation, he therefore concluded, was ‘anti-socialistic’.⁷⁰⁰ In any case, insofar as ‘Trade cooperation is simply a form of industrial partnership, in which the society of co-operators is in the relation of capitalist to the outer world’, it in no way promised to solve the systemic problems of ‘the prevailing industrial anarchy’.⁷⁰¹

The ‘ethical teaching of Christ’ was no more compatible with ‘the theory of modern scientific Socialism’.⁷⁰² Its ‘one-sided, introspective and individualistic character’ was indeed just as ‘anti-socialistic’ as the ‘bourgeois virtues’ embodied in the principle of co-operation.⁷⁰³ Like Aveling, a former bigwig in the NSS, Bax pulled no punches when it came to religion.⁷⁰⁴ And, as we have already seen, he was not hostile to religion as such. But Christianity, he felt, was particularly repugnant. Building on insights gleaned from Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*, he portrayed Christianity as uniquely individualistic, rendering it – pace Headlam and his followers – incompatible with Socialism.

Moreover, the ‘impossible standard of “personal holiness”’ prescribed in the gospel discourses meant ‘hypocrisy’ flourished, a

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 95. Bax thus undermined, at the same time, Cunningham’s transitional conception of the co-operative movement – that is, that co-operation was less an obstacle to be surmounted than a harbinger of things to come.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., p. 94. Here, Bax isolated some of the problems discussed by Jon Elster in ‘From Here To There; or, If Cooperative Ownership Is So Desirable, Why Are There So Few Cooperatives?’, *Social Philosophy & Policy*, 6/2 (1989), pp. 93-111. For Marx’s own view see Bruno Jossa, ‘Marx, Marxism and the cooperative movement’, *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 29 (2005), pp. 3-18.

⁷⁰² Bax, ‘Unscientific Socialism’, p. 97.

⁷⁰³ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁴ The ‘terrible condition of our poor is due to two curses’, Aveling wrote in 1884: ‘Capitalism and Christianity’. Edward Aveling, ‘Christianity and Capitalism’, *To-day*, 1/1 (Jan. 1884), p. 30. Aveling’s remarks elicited a response from Headlam the following month in the same journal, to which he in turn replied in the issue after. Rev. S. D. Headlam and Rev. C. Marson, ‘Christianity and Capitalism. A Reply’, *To-day*, 1/2 (Feb. 1884), pp. 125-134. Edward Aveling, ‘Christianity and Capitalism. A Rejoinder’, *To-day*, 1/3 (Mar. 1884), pp. 177-187.

phenomenon unknown in ‘the classical world’: ‘men are driven to the compromise of pretending to attain’ an ascetic, ethical standard, Bax wrote, ‘which as a matter of fact no good man really thinks of attaining’.⁷⁰⁵ Besides, ‘when realised’, it

seldom resulted in anything but (1) an apotheosised priggism (e. g. the puritan type), or (2) in an epileptic hysteria (e.g. the Catholic saint type), and which at the best is a tour-de-force involving an amount of concentrated moral energy that may excite our wonder perhaps, just as may the concentrated physical energy of the tight-rope dancer, but which we feel to be just as useless.⁷⁰⁶

Thus, against ‘the Semitic ethics of personal holiness’, Socialism, on Bax’s view, must align itself, instead, with ‘the Aryan ethics (whether classical or Norse) of social utility’.⁷⁰⁷

These were themes that Bax would return to repeatedly over the course of his career. They also formed the subject matter of some of his most significant theoretical contributions written during the 1880s and nineties. Two of those contributions are expounded in Chapter 8. But the position he adopted on ‘the introspective attitude of the Christian ethics’ also informed his evaluation of the other sections of the Socialist movement.⁷⁰⁸ Even at this tentative stage, Bax held that British Socialism had acquired more than its fair share of the puritan and Catholic saint types whom he described. Neither phenomenon augured well for its future.

Turning his attention to ‘Sentimental’ Socialism, that whole part of the movement, Bax wrote, ‘is born of the morbid self-consciousness of our Christian and Bourgeois civilization run to seed’.⁷⁰⁹ ‘The young men and women of our *blasé* middle-class civilisation require a stimulus’, he explained; ‘this stimulus may be aesthetic, philanthropic, or social. It may

⁷⁰⁵ Bax, ‘Unscientific Socialism’, p. 97.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 98.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 99.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 100-101.

consist in languishing vapouring on art, on improved dwellings, on social reconstruction. Just now it wears the latter aspect.’⁷¹⁰ Of course, organisations such as the Guild of St. George, the Charity Organisation Society, and the embryonic Settlement movement were all implicated by Bax’s statement.⁷¹¹ But the intended target of these utterances was the Fellowship of the New Life, precursor to the Fabian Society. Bax attacked the programmatic vagueness of the body established by Thomas Davidson, satirizing the catholicity of the average “Brother of the Higher Life,” or member of the “Communion of Noble Aspirations”.⁷¹² What he objected to most, however, in Sentimental Socialism was not its inadequacy as a practical political force, but rather its retention of the introspection of Christian morality, the preference, that is, among its number for analysis of the *self* over the social.⁷¹³

For his survey of the ‘Utopian Socialist schemes of the first half of the present century’, Bax finally slipped into Engelsian gear.⁷¹⁴ ‘Utopian Socialism’, he wrote, following Engels’s argument, ‘was only the pre-scientific and infantile stage of that matured Science of society which modern Socialism represents on its practical side’; ‘Socialism proper’, he continued, ‘presupposes the developed industrial system, the machinery, the population &c., of the most advanced countries of modern times as its essential antecedent condition, and... takes its stand on the continuity of

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., p. 100.

⁷¹¹ For the Guild of St. George see Mark Frost, *The Lost Companions and John Ruskin’s Guild of St. George. A Revisionary History* (London, Anthem, 2014). For Octavia Hill and the Charity Organisation Society see Elizabeth Baigent and Ben Cowell (eds.), *Nobler imaginings and mightier struggles’. Octavia Hill, social activism, and the remaking of British society* (London, Institute of Historical Research, 2016). For the settlement movement see Standish Meacham, *Toynbee Hall and Social Reform 1880-1914. The Search for Community* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1987).

⁷¹² Bax, ‘Unscientific Socialism’, p. 100.

⁷¹³ See Bevir, *Making of British Socialism*, Ch. 12. See, also, Kristen Harris, *Walt Whitman and British Socialism. ‘The Love of Comrades’* (London, Routledge, 2016).

⁷¹⁴ Bax, ‘Unscientific Socialism’, p. 101.

historic evolution.⁷¹⁵ But, even here, Bax managed to inject a commentary on Christian ethics.

Bax observed that ‘there are people who still believe in (more or less) select little bands going into the backwoods and founding colonies’.⁷¹⁶ In truth, while Edward Carpenter may have begun to enact his vision of the Simple Life at Millthorpe, inducing Shaw to label him the ‘Noble Savage’, there were no other steps taken to realise that ambition until the following decade.⁷¹⁷ In anticipation, then, rather than reality, Bax warned that any “coming out of the world,” in the sense of establishing an independent “community of saints” is an anachronism.⁷¹⁸ The phrase “community of saints” had been selected carefully. For no experiment of that kind, Bax averred, had had ‘any other than a Christian or sentimental basis.’⁷¹⁹ It followed, therefore, that those responsible for the establishment of intentional communities had ‘no more right to the special appellation “Socialist” than a body of monks.’⁷²⁰ They, too, like their Christian and Sentimental counterparts, were also, Bax declared, ultimately more interested in themselves than society.

The final category of ‘unscientific Socialism’ that Bax drew attention to was similarly individualistic. However, the Anarchist, at least, was ‘a logical, thorough-going individualist’, however fundamentally illogical his or her plan to ‘destroy all organisation whatever’ might be.⁷²¹ Self-regard, in this instance, was not dishonestly (or self-deceptively) dressed up as

⁷¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 101, 102.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., p. 101.

⁷¹⁷ See Bevir, *Making of British Socialism*, pp. 273-276; Pierson, *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism*, pp. 219-226; and Matthew Thomas, *Anarchist Ideas and Counter-Cultures in Britain, 1880-1914. Revolutions in Everyday Life* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005). Shaw is quoted in Livesey, *Socialism, Sex, and the Culture of Aestheticism*, p. 106.

⁷¹⁸ Bax, ‘Unscientific Socialism’, p. 102.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., p. 101.

⁷²⁰ Ibid.

⁷²¹ Ibid., pp. 102, 103.

something else, that is to say, as something other-regarding. Here, Bax's knowledge of the incipient Socialist intelligentsia determined not only his treatment of the subject, but the fact that it formed a point of discussion at all. For Bax's final category, like his first and second, was not in the least bit abstract. Various strands of Anarchist thought had, indeed, penetrated – pre-dated even – the British Socialist movement. Josiah Warren and Benjamin Tucker both had their admirers in London clubland, and the Fabian Society was briefly struck down by 'a sort of influenza of Anarchism' in 1884.⁷²² Moreover, Bax was already familiar with the conversation of two of its central proponents: the wavering Shaw, and the steadfast Prince Kropotkin.⁷²³

Neglecting the nuances of which he was plainly aware for the sake of polemical impact, Bax confined his critique of Anarchism to two aspects: to the possibility, first, of its permanence; and second, to the desirability of its ostensibly destructive tactics. The latter, he argued right away, essentially precluded the former. Bax ruled out the prospect of any stability where 'the destruction of those elements of the current civilization, bought by the bitter toil and experience of centuries of human effort', had been carried out.⁷²⁴ Rather, a revolution executed on Anarchist lines could eventuate only in chaos. 'The struggle between man and nature – including that which is natural, i.e., merely animal and brutal in man', Bax wrote, taking up the closely related second aspect directly, 'can with certainty only be maintained to the advantage of the former by organisation, and we think

⁷²² See Quail, *The Slow Burning Fuse*, pp. 1-102; Shaw, 'The Fabian Society', p. 3. The most complete account of the history of the SL is given by Thompson in *William Morris*.

⁷²³ For Shaw see Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, Ch. 4. For Kropotkin see Matthew S. Adams, *Kropotkin, Read, and the Intellectual History of British Anarchism. Between Reason and Romanticism* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

⁷²⁴ Bax, 'Unscientific Socialism', p. 103.

that Anarchism stands self-condemned as to desirability when once these facts are clearly seen.’⁷²⁵

That Bax repudiated Anarchism is not, of course, to say that he rejected it *in toto*. The more benign ‘Communist-Anarchist section of the party’ undoubtedly had its merits – much more so, at least, than the three other ‘codes of ideas’.⁷²⁶ Indeed, Bax conceded that the goal of the Anarchist ‘and that of the collectivist is the same substantially.’⁷²⁷ The word ‘substantially’, however, was consigned a heavy load. Substantially was still a far cry from completely – and it was precisely the similitude obtaining between them that most necessitated their parting of ways: their likeness threatened to saddle ‘Socialism proper’ with unwanted baggage, and Bax’s article was an effort conceived to unburden Socialism of ‘old and rotten material’, or theories likely to interfere with its own prospective purchase. Fortunately, of the four ‘unscientific Socialist standpoints’ the Anarchist was the least important ‘numerically and influentially’.⁷²⁸ The Christian and Sentimental varieties were scarcely much more imposing. All such ‘red-herring’ Socialist projects had to be exposed nonetheless, irrespective of their deficit in political leverage.⁷²⁹ The only omission that Bax did make was Henry George. He was omitted because, Bax argued, land nationalisation was ‘the child of true Socialism’.⁷³⁰ It would be delivered, however, not through the Single Tax, but ‘as the natural issue of a general Socialist revolution.’⁷³¹

⁷²⁵ Ibid., p. 104.

⁷²⁶ Ibid.

⁷²⁷ Ibid.

⁷²⁸ Ibid., p. 105.

⁷²⁹ ‘There is probably more danger in Great Britain in a Conservative “red-herring” than in a (so-called) “advanced” one such as Anarchism’, Bax argued. Ibid.

⁷³⁰ Ibid.

⁷³¹ Ibid.

As we have seen, Bax had no patience with the ideological impurity of other Socialists. He was also impatient with those 'scientific' Socialists, like Hyndman, who sought to pursue a parliamentary strategy post-haste.⁷³² Unlike the latter who never really budged from the gradualist, constitutional notion of the transition to Socialism, Bax was committed to a kind of proto-Bolshevism from the outset. As he later put in his autobiography:

The idea implicit in not a few of those who belonged to the Socialist League was more or less that of a federation of Socialist societies throughout the country, bearing some sort of analogy to the federated Jacobin Clubs of the French Revolution, which should educate and organise public opinion, especially of the working classes, so that when the cataclysm to which the capitalist system was leading up should supervene, these societies might be in a position to give direction to the revolutionary movement.⁷³³

All the basic tenets of the faction established by Lenin in 1903 – the notion of the vanguard party, the principle of the ends justifying the means, and democratic centralism – Bax endorsed in advance.⁷³⁴ His contempt for 'the will of the majority', however, had a more quotidian origin than the revolutionary Jacobin Clubs that Lenin likewise admired.⁷³⁵ Like Hyndman, Bax's efforts in the field of political theory, as we shall see in Chapter 11, betrayed a significant debt to Mill.

⁷³² On the issue of parliamentary participation see Mark Bevir, 'The British Social Democratic Federation 1880-1885', pp. 207-229; Ruth Kinna, 'William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism', *History of Political Thought*, 15/4 (1994), pp. 593-613; and Barrow and Bullock, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement*, pp. 9-29.

⁷³³ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 81. Cowley, *The Victorian Encounter with Marx*, p. 35. Ruth Kinna, 'The Jacobinism and Patriotism of Ernest Belfort Bax', *History of European Ideas*, 30/4 (2004), p. 474.

⁷³⁴ Robert Arch, for instance, wrote that, 'If the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia had occurred in the 1880s Bax would without doubt have supported it.' He subtitled the section under which he issued that utterance, 'Early Impossibilism'. *Ernest Belfort Bax, Thinker and Pioneer* (London, The Hyndman Literary Committee, 1927), p. 19.

⁷³⁵ For Lenin's political thought see Marcel Liebman, *Leninism Under Lenin* (London, Merlin Press, 1975). For a recent reassessment see Lars T. Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered. 'What Is to Be Done?' in Context* (Leiden, Brill, 2006).

For a ‘scientific’ Socialist of his generation, Bax paid inordinate attention to institutions and arrangements during the transition to the stateless, post-scarcity society that they jointly envisaged. His endeavour to produce a concrete answer to the question of what came next was all the more striking given his earlier insouciance to detail, as outlined in Chapter 4. The immediate cause of that shift of focus was provided by the so-called Dod Street affair, the perceived threat to freedom of speech among Radicals and Socialists in 1886, when a number of Socialist leaders were arrested for obstruction in the East End of London.⁷³⁶ Bax’s interest in individual rights received a further boost by his decision to embark upon a legal career in 1889, following his departure from the SL the previous year. Yet Bax had already made headway in divesting himself of the former Spencerian views that diverted his attention from practical issues. The specifically Millian emphases in his thought may have been later additions. But by 1882 Bax was posing new questions about the role of the individual in history, about Spencer’s reconciliation of Science and Theology, and about the preconditions of knowledge that set him on a new course intellectually.⁷³⁷

⁷³⁶ For an account of the Dod Street affair see Thompson, *William Morris*, pp. 393–403.

⁷³⁷ ‘It is an important question for the student of the philosophy of history, Bax wrote in 1882, ‘indeed we say the great central question, in how far human development is determined, like lower forms of development, by inflexible cosmic laws, and where and in how far the individual may be viewed as a modifying cause, in other words, the precise point at which human will enters as an element of causation.’ *Jean Paul Marat. A Historico-Biographical Sketch* (London, Modern Press, 1882), p. 19. A year later, he wrote: ‘The tendency at present is to exaggerate the historical method, or at least to draw from it conclusions scarcely warranted. The sense of historic continuity, and of evolution, leads many thinkers to ignore the significance of epoch-making events and sudden changes, or of voluntarily-directed action in human affairs’. *Kant’s Prolegomena*, p. xvii. On epistemology, Bax argued in the same text: ‘Most savants of any eminence instinctively recognise the impossibility of a mere mechanical aggregate of phenomena being the “last word” of systematised human knowledge. Scientific Monism, as is perhaps only natural, seeks to attain satisfaction by mere phrases such as “unknowable,” “one reality,” &c... rather than by a diligent investigation into the conditions of knowledge itself, the method inaugurated by Kant, and the only one which can lead to a permanently satisfactory synthesis.’ *Ibid.*, pp. xcix–c. Bax took another dig at Spencer in 1886, by arguing that the reconciliation that the latter had professed to ‘effect between

Far more so than Hyndman, Bax fully imbibed the main currents of contemporary thought, which helped undermine some of the views espoused in his youthful writings. Bax's consumption of advanced thought was not, however, uncritical. Rather, as with his interaction with Engels, Bax reinterpreted the beliefs and evidence he encountered.

In philosophy, Bax hailed 'the usefulness of the work done' by the so-called 'Neo-Hegelian school'.⁷³⁸ At the same time, though, he expressed regret at 'the futile efforts of able and earnest men' like Green, who 'would stake their whole intellectual career in the forlorn hope of resuscitating the "ethics of inwardness."' ⁷³⁹ As might be expected, Bax rejected the Neo-Hegelian morality of self-realization. He also rejected the Idealist view of free-will, not to mention the panlogical metaphysic the Idealists adhered to. Bax was similarly dismissive, however, of thinkers, including Marx and Engels, who sanctioned contrary points of view: above all, the 'crude' form of materialism, which he associated with the latter pair, and the refusal to accept the existence of what he termed the 'Chance element' in history (i.e. the part played by 'the action of the individual').⁷⁴⁰

During the 1880s and nineties Bax pursued these themes in three texts. He pursued them, firstly, in the essays 'Universal History from a Socialist Standpoint' and 'The New Ethic', published in 1886 and 1888 respectively. And he pursued them, secondly, in his first book-length work of philosophy, *The Problem of Reality*, published in 1892. However, notwithstanding moments of recognition, Bax's work did not receive

science and religion' rested on what was 'almost a dualism'. *Handbook*, pp. 381, 380.

⁷³⁸ Bax, *Handbook*, p. 393. Kirk Willis, 'The Introduction and Critical Reception of Hegelian Thought in Britain 1830-1900', *Victorian Studies*, 32/1 (1988), pp. 85-111.

⁷³⁹ Bax, *Handbook*, p. 402.

⁷⁴⁰ Ernest Belfort Bax, *The Problem of Reality. Being Outline Suggestions for a Philosophical Reconstruction* (London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1892), p. 159.

attention from the philosophers whom he attacked.⁷⁴¹ Bax's more opaque criticism of Engels did, though, elicit a response. That exchange is reconstructed in Chapters 8 and 9, as is Bax's critique of the British Idealists.

Elsewhere, Bax and Engels were, however, on the same page. Nowhere is that more apparent than in their uses of, and respect for, the 'remarkable work done in connexion with the early history of institutions, together with Comparative Mythology and the science of Anthropology generally.'⁷⁴² The Liberal narrative of democratic Teutonism associated with the Oxford School of historians – Edward Freeman, J. R. Green, and William Stubbs – loomed large over the intellectual life of late-Victorian Britain. As did the work, as we have heard, of Henry Maine, Frederic Seebohm, and G. L. Gomme on the concept of the village community.⁷⁴³ Bax and Engels were well-versed in the work of these authors, and they appropriated the findings of their research for their own Socialist theories.⁷⁴⁴ Like Engels, who drew, above all, on the work of Lewis Morgan, Bax thus believed that 'the evolution of human society is a progress from

⁷⁴¹ J. H. Muirhead, for example, invited Bax to contribute to a two-volume work on contemporary British philosophy published in 1924, and Grant Richards held a dinner in Bax's honour the following year for his service to philosophical thought and exposition. Cowley, *The Victorian Encounter with Marx*, pp. 59, 136. Arch, *Ernest Belfort Bax*, p. 5.

⁷⁴² Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 69.

⁷⁴³ See J. W. Burrow, 'The Village Community' and the Uses of History in Late Nineteenth-Century England', in Neil McKendrick (ed.), *Historical Perspectives. Studies in English Thought and Society in Honour of J. H. Plumb* (London, Europa, 1974), pp. 255-285. See, also, Simon John Cooke, 'The Making of the English: English History, British Identity, Aryan Villages, 1870-1914', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 75/4 (2014), pp. 629-649.

⁷⁴⁴ The pre-eminent work on this topic is Vaninskaya, *Morris and the Idea of Community*. For a shorter analysis see Anna Vaninskaya, 'William Morris's Germania: The Roots of Socialism', in Phillippa Bennett and Rosie Miles (eds.), *William Morris in the Twenty-First Century* (Bern, Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 169-192.

Socialism to Socialism'.⁷⁴⁵ The next chapter reconstructs Bax's account of that process.

⁷⁴⁵ Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, p. iii.

8

From Socialism to Socialism

As with Bax's critique of Pearson, 'Universal History from a Socialist Standpoint' was published in *The Religion of Socialism*. It was the largest essay in the volume, and forms the best introduction to his Socialist thought at the time. 'The New Ethic' had much the same relationship to *The Ethics of Socialism*, the volume in which it was published in 1889. The essay was first published the previous year in *Die Neue Zeit*, the theoretical organ of the German SPD, and Bax justly regarded it as a 'pendant' to 'Universal History'.⁷⁴⁶ That being so, the essays provide, in tandem, a singular vantage-point from which to assess his views on Socialism during the latter part of the decade.

In the first essay, Bax expounded a philosophical analysis of history modelled on Hegel's course of lectures on the same subject.⁷⁴⁷ The emphases of Hegel's original survey were simply shifted around and inverted. The second essay was less parasitic. There, in its slightly revised state, owing to the need no longer to tailor its content to the prescriptions of the German Anti-Socialist Law, Bax issued a dual-commentary on the moral philosophies belonging on the one hand to the 'old metaphysical schools' and their 'modern semi-theological' counterparts and to the 'modern Empiricists' on the other.⁷⁴⁸ He also set out there the 'New Ethic of Socialism'.

⁷⁴⁶ Ernest Belfort Bax, *The Ethics of Socialism. Being Further Essays in Modern Socialist Criticism*, &c. (London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1889), p. iiv.

⁷⁴⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Mineola, NY, Dover, 1956).

⁷⁴⁸ Ernest Belfort Bax, 'The New Ethic', in *Ethics of Socialism*, p. 11.

The essays betoken the Hegelian and Engelsian registers in which they were written. They also record the continuity in Bax's main line of thought since 'The Ideal of the Future'. For Bax had not jettisoned his earlier ideas and arguments. He had revised them, rather, in the light of further reading in philosophy, history, anthropology, and by reading the work of Marx and Engels. The result was certainly distinctive. But to say that 'Bax was little concerned with problems of economic, political or social analysis' is to exaggerate his heterodoxy.⁷⁴⁹

To imply that Bax focused on 'changes in man's consciousness' at the expense of the categories enumerated above entails foisting a distinction onto Bax's work which he did not cleave to himself.⁷⁵⁰ As we shall see in this chapter, Bax was not disproportionately concerned with 'mankind's changing attitudes or values'.⁷⁵¹ Nor was he inordinately vexed by 'philosophical questions' or 'middle class mores'.⁷⁵² On the contrary, as we shall see in Chapter 11, to a much greater extent than many of his contemporaries, Bax was alive to questions of practical Socialism.

Following Hegel, Bax viewed history as a process synonymous with 'the development of the State'.⁷⁵³ He averred that the 'aim and meaning of the philosophy of history is the discovery of the Dialectic imminent in it, of the

⁷⁴⁹ The work of the French Socialist, Juan Jaurès, whom Bax held in very high esteem, and to whom he dedicated his second major work of philosophy in 1908, supplied probably the closest contemporary comparison. For Jaurès see Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism. Its Rise, Growth, and Dissolution. Volume II. The Golden Age* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978), Ch. 5. It is also worth noting here, however, that Bax is not mentioned once in Kolakowski's text. Ernest Belfort Bax, *The Roots of Reality. Being Suggestions for a Philosophical Reconstruction* (New York, R. W. Dodge & Company, 1908). Pierson, 'Ernest Belfort Bax', p. 44.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 45, 57.

⁷⁵² Thompson, *William Morris*, pp. 372-375.

⁷⁵³ Bax, 'Universal History from a Socialist Standpoint', in *Religion of Socialism*, p. 7.

main process underlying the whole development.’⁷⁵⁴ History, in short, according to Bax, was not a capricious course of events. It was, rather, a meaningful process that worked itself out through ‘the unravelling of oppositions’.⁷⁵⁵ He isolated two, in particular, as key: the opposition between ‘Nature and Mind’ and the opposition between the ‘Individual and the Society’.⁷⁵⁶

To be sure, the first opposition that Bax identified concerned the ‘evolution of human consciousness’ – it was, he held, an antagonism of chiefly ‘speculative, religious, and artistic significance’.⁷⁵⁷ But the second opposition was ‘of more immediately practical interest’, for it ‘contained the notion of personal ownership of property,’ which, in turn, informed the nature of ‘the whole state machinery’.⁷⁵⁸ However, Bax did not treat these pairs as discrete phenomena. Bax made it clear, rather, that they were ‘intimately connected with each other’, and that they advanced, as he put it, ‘*pari passu*’.⁷⁵⁹

If private property constituted the driving force of the antinomy between individual and society, the motive power behind the antinomy between nature and mind was provided, above all, by religion. In ‘Universal History’ Bax established the stages through which both antinomies passed. He also located their mutual destination – the return, on a higher plane, to their joint place of origin.

Bax located the birthplace of both oppositions in ‘Primitive Communism’, ‘the earliest condition of man as a social being’, a form of

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 4. See Hegel’s introduction to *Philosophy of History*.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

⁷⁵⁷ Pierson, ‘Ernest Belfort Bax’, p. 46. Bax, ‘Universal History’, p. 7.

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

social organisation where both ‘individual interest and individual property’ was ‘unknown’, and in which religion ‘had for its end and object the society’.⁷⁶⁰ It was only when this harmonious, stateless form of society began to alter that the oppositions that Bax coupled with History itself began to unfold.

The first line of demarcation was the product of new economic conditions – ‘the introduction of agriculture on a more extended scale, the taming of domestic animals, the acquirement of extensive property in flocks and herds and slaves (the captives taken in war), the beginnings of manufacture,’ and, ‘perhaps more than all the improvement in weapons of war’.⁷⁶¹ The outcome was the advent of the city – the first stage in civilization.

With the termination of ‘primitive barbaric society’, for the first time, private property ‘entered into the constitution of society’.⁷⁶² In addition to the division between slave and freeman, classes also consequently emerged. These initial cities, however, were of limited longevity. They were absorbed, first, into a larger federation of cities, then into a consolidated kingdom or empire – such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Phoenicia, China, or India. In short, they were quickly superseded by ‘the vast Oriental civilizations with which universal history begins.’⁷⁶³

Yet, at this inceptive stage, ‘though the material antagonism between individual and community, no less than the speculative

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 4-5, 7.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁷⁶² Ibid., pp. 10, 11.

⁷⁶³ Ibid., p. 11.

antagonism between nature and spirit,' had begun, it had not developed very far.⁷⁶⁴ To develop further, more stimuli were needed.

The real spur to the unravelling of the antitheses that Bax presented started with the Greeks in the eighth century BC. Hitherto a dynamic historical force, the East became stationary, the free development of the city was arrested, and the 'lead in human progress passed on to the peoples of Southeastern Europe'.⁷⁶⁵ It was in the cities of the classical world – first Greece, then Italy – that the 'individual interest' steadily 'gained the upper hand over the social'.⁷⁶⁶ It was there, too, that 'the supernatural view of the universe and man's relation to it' steadily supplanted the 'old naive and natural one'.⁷⁶⁷ To begin with, though, these were merely tendencies. Despite the momentum they acquired there, they were not fully realised, Bax argued, 'until the city-form had been reduced to a meaningless phrase' and given way to the 'great city-empire of Rome'.⁷⁶⁸

Bax's periodisation already betrayed at this point its Hegelian origins. He simply added to Hegel's account the more recent category of primitive communism. Bax also borrowed, however, a number of passages from Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. He resorted, for instance, to the first of these in claiming that 'In the "Know thyself" of Socrates we have the first expression of that personal morality as opposed to the old social morality, which culminated in the Christianity of later ages.'⁷⁶⁹ However, the words 'the first expression' bore a heavy load.

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 17. 'The principle of Socrates manifests a revolutionary aspects towards the Athenian State', Hegel wrote. *Philosophy of History*, p. 270.

‘The races of Southeastern Europe’, Bax explained, ‘were destined in the ancient world to work out the opposition of interest between individual and society on its economical side’.⁷⁷⁰ For the prosecution of slave-holding production was exercised there ‘for the benefit of the individual rich citizen’, rather than to the advantage of the more survival-ridden aristocracies that dominated the Oriental world.⁷⁷¹ For ‘a satisfactory *ethic* of Individualism’ the Romans would have to look, instead, to Western Asia.⁷⁷²

The immediate descendents of Socrates, in other words – the Cynic, Cyreniac, Stoic, and Epicurean philosophical sects – merely represented a series of false starts in the progress of the nature-mind antithesis. For Bax, borrowing heavily, and idiosyncratically, still from Hegel, it was only with the establishment of Christianity that the principle of individualism properly asserted itself on the religious track. Then, and only then, ‘personal as opposed to social morality and the religion of another world as opposed to the ancient religions of this world... received official expression.’⁷⁷³ Thus, he concluded: ‘The Christian empire accordingly presented both economically and ethically a more complete triumph of the principle of individualism over the principle of socialism than the world had seen before.’⁷⁷⁴

That, however, was not the end of the story. Economically, ‘the classical development’ had stalled.⁷⁷⁵ Leaning on Engels’s foray into ancient history to make the point, Bax argued that the collapse of the Roman Empire was due to the fact that, in the absence of any great industry and the

⁷⁷⁰ Bax, ‘Universal History’, p. 18.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 22. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 333.

⁷⁷⁴ Bax, ‘Universal History’, p. 22.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

world market having collapsed, combined with the stigma attached to productive labour, slave-holding production had ceased to pay.⁷⁷⁶ The ‘effete civilization of antiquity’ was, therefore, transformed ‘into a new world’ by ‘the German tribes, fresh from their primitive village communities.’⁷⁷⁷ Bax argued that ‘the feudal system’ that emerged ‘was nothing else than primitive communistic society, with the notion of sovereignty on the part of the head of the community super-added.’⁷⁷⁸ On the religious plane, the ‘barbarians’ accepted the Christianity of their Roman forebears. But much ‘of the old tribal morality of the Germans’ persisted.⁷⁷⁹ It was ultimately ‘only to the monastic recluse... that religion was a personal matter.’⁷⁸⁰ The principle of individualism would not reach its highest development until the medieval system had concluded its own process of decay.

Bax divided the Middle Ages into two epochs. The first of these he termed ‘Feudalism proper’, and he assigned it to the period stretching from the eighth to the thirteenth century.⁷⁸¹ It was characterised, economically, by small-scale production ‘for use on the feudal estate’.⁷⁸² Hence the exchange of goods was limited. With the expansion of markets, however, towards the close of this first epoch – once, that is, an economic surplus had begun to be produced – the second period of the Middle Ages then got underway, terminating in the sixteenth century. The chief characteristic of that epoch, in the economic sphere, was the flourishing of the guild industry. The industrial system presided over by these corporations gave rise to two forms of conflict: one incipient and implicit, the other advanced

⁷⁷⁶ Engels, *Origin of the Family*, p. 186.

⁷⁷⁷ Bax, ‘Universal History’, pp. 23, 22.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*

and explicit. That is, the opposition, on the one hand, between middle class and proletariat, and, on the other, the struggle between burgher and noble. It was the latter conflict, Bax argued, that eventually led to the collapse of the medieval system. It resolved itself in the triumph of 'the new individualist capitalism'.⁷⁸³

Bax commandeered the narrative set out in the *Communist Manifesto* to bring the economic track of his argument to its highest point:

History from the sixteenth century downwards is a picture of the struggle of the rising middle or manufacturing and trading classes, to emancipate themselves from the trammels of the feudal or landowning classes, and thereby to attain to individual freedom of action in the furthering of private interests.⁷⁸⁴

The 'meaning of history', he went on,

since the close of the medieval period is so plain as to be unmistakeable. Every political aspiration, every political reform, has meant a breaking asunder of the bonds which held the old civilisation together, the freeing of the individual from the duties now obsolete which bound him in some sort to the social whole.⁷⁸⁵

Not surprisingly, Bax regarded the sixteenth century as pivotal too for the development of individualism on the religious track. In the Protestant Reformation, Christianity shed its medieval semi-pagan form. In an analysis not quite worthy of Weber, but broadly congruent with his thesis on the Protestant ethic, Bax averred that, in Protestantism the economic individualism of nascent capitalism found its religious match:

Under Protestantism religion has become necessarily divorced from worldly avocations. The continual interruptions to industry, the time allowed by Catholicism in its festivals and holidays for enjoyment, not less than the time exacted for penance, etc., could not be tolerated. The rising middle class were beginning to find out

⁷⁸³ Ibid., p. 29.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 28-29.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 29-30. 'The bourgeoisie,' Marx and Engels famously wrote, 'has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors', and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment'. *Communist Manifesto*, p. 222.

the “dignity of labour,” that it was appointed to men to work, etc., and that the longer the journeyman worked, and the less time he wasted in amusement the better it was for his soul and their bodies.⁷⁸⁶

Following Hegel, Bax isolated the Reformation as the decisive waypost in the nature-mind spectrum. Individualism in religion reached its acme. For Hegel, of course, the rise of Protestantism represented a key landmark in the progress of freedom.⁷⁸⁷ For Bax, on the other hand, it amounted to Weber’s ‘iron cage’.⁷⁸⁸ The ‘middle class order’ that Protestantism both mirrored and promoted was not, however, on Bax’s view, history’s finale.⁷⁸⁹ Instead, he anticipated one further twist.

Bax asserted that ‘growth implies a process comprising three terms’.⁷⁹⁰ He described their relationship as follows:

the first, indefinite and crude, with the seeds of its own negation present in it as part of its very nature from the first; the second, the accomplishment of this negation, which accomplishment, however, becomes the matrix whence issues the third and final term of the process, which is nothing else than the negation of the negation.⁷⁹¹

With the consummation of individualism in the middle-class order that began its tenure in the sixteenth century, the first two of those terms had been completed. The antitheses latent in primitive society had reached their fullest potential. Thus, it was only the third term that awaited actualisation. It did not have to wait long.

⁷⁸⁶ Bax, ‘Universal History’, p. 28. For an exposition of Weber’s criticism of ‘Marxism’ see Anthony Giddens, ‘Introduction’, in Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London and New York, Routledge, 2001), pp. vii-xxiv.

⁷⁸⁷ Hegel held that the Reformation was the ‘all-enlightening Sun’, which had finally broken ‘upon the world after the long, eventful, and terrible night of the Middle Ages’. *Philosophy of History*, pp. 412, 411.

⁷⁸⁸ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, p. 123.

⁷⁸⁹ Bax, ‘Universal History’, p. 31.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Individualism, Bax wrote, 'has no sooner completely realised itself, than its death-knell is rung'.⁷⁹² It 'finds itself strangled', he argued, imitating the *Communist Manifesto* again,

by the very economical revolution which had rendered its existence possible. For that revolution which has brought about an absolute separation of classes, has deprived the one class of all individuality whatever, albeit their abstract freedom still remains to mock them. Production in its process has become more than ever before social and co-operative, notwithstanding that its end and object is more than ever before mere individual aggrandisement. The majority are the slaves of modern industrialism. Individualism, therefore, for the majority has become a meaningless phrase. The same with supernatural religion.⁷⁹³

The third term, then, Bax concluded, meant 'a return to the essential characteristic' of primitive society: 'i.e. Solidarity, Communism, or Socialism'.⁷⁹⁴ Hence the full import of history's convoluted course now became clear:

The passage from Primitive Communism to the Communism of the future was only possible through the mediation of History otherwise expressed, of Individualism... The early solidarity of kinship had to be resolved into its direct antithesis – individualism, universal and world-wide. Individualism in economics, in ethics, in religion, was the necessary intermediate step before the final goal of universal solidarity or communism, which unites the solidarity of early society with the cosmopolitan principle of individualism, could be reached.⁷⁹⁵

So far, so unremarkable perhaps: going by 'Universal History' alone, Engels was surely right not to feel anxious about Bax's intellectual trajectory. There was evidence enough within the essay to suppose that he would, indeed,

⁷⁹² Ibid., p. 34.

⁷⁹³ Ibid. Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, pp. 225-233, 237.

⁷⁹⁴ Bax, 'Universal History', p. 35.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid, pp. 35-36. Bax, it is worth remarking here, never gave this conception up. Even as the concept of primitive communism began to unravel in the 1890's he continued to cleave to it unrepentantly. See, for example, the following article, where Bax refused to cede ground to the findings deposited in a recent article by Paul Vinogradoff published in the *Historical Review*: 'Marxophobia', *Justice*, (Jul. 9, 1898), p. 5. For the wider context see Cook, 'The Making of the English', pp. 629-649.

eventually fall in line. For, in the main, as we have seen, Bax recycled the economically determined, stadial conception of history set out in the *Communist Manifesto*. The addition of the latest research on pre-history, moreover, was in line with Engels's view on historical periodisation.⁷⁹⁶ On top of those points of congruence, Bax's use of Hegel's dialectical method formed an obvious third. Admittedly, Bax's manipulation of Hegel's *Philosophy of History* constituted a deviation; there was no counterpart in the work of Engels or Marx to Bax's substitution of a self-centred and introspective individualism for Hegel's 'progress of the consciousness of freedom'.⁷⁹⁷ Like Weber, Bax sought to document non-economic phenomena in history to an extent unseen in the work of either of the former pair. But it was also apparent which of the two factors – economic and non-economic – that Bax chose to privilege in causal terms. On this, he nailed his colours to the mast erected by Engels and Marx.

'The New Ethic', on the other hand, did provide cause for concern. The offending article was not of course the position of ethical relativism that Bax endorsed there – his subordination, that is, of ethics to economic relations.⁷⁹⁸ Rather, Bax's infraction was to continue to cleave to the notion of a 'religion of Socialism'. For Engels, to seek to establish a 'new, true religion' on the 'basis of an essentially materialist conception of nature', as

⁷⁹⁶ Hobsbawm, *How to Change the World*, p. 40. See, also, Samuel, 'British Marxist Historians', pp. 34-36.

⁷⁹⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 19.

⁷⁹⁸ Engels argued: 'all moral theories have been hitherto the product, in the last analysis, of the economic conditions of society obtaining at the time. And as society has hitherto moved in class antagonisms, morality has always been class morality; it has either justified the domination and the interests of the ruling class, or, ever since the oppressed class became powerful enough, it has represented its indignation against this domination and the future interests of the oppressed.' *Anti-Duhring. Herr Eugen Duhring's Revolution in Science* (Moscow, Foreign Languages, 1954), pp. 132-133.

Bax attempted in ‘The New Ethic’, was risible. It was akin to ‘regarding modern chemistry as true alchemy.’⁷⁹⁹

In reality, ‘The New Ethic’ was not a new departure. The fact that Bax entitled his first collection of essays, *The Religion of Socialism*, indicates the importance that Bax attributed to the concept that clearly irked Engels so much. But religion was not the only source of conflict between them. This is not the place to explicate those further differences. It is enough to simply recall here Bernstein’s recollection of Bax’s ‘lively’ contributions ‘to the conversation round Engels’ table’ to infer that Engels was probably very well-aware of them.⁸⁰⁰ There is good reason in fact to believe that the real target of some of Engels’s utterances in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, from which the above quotation is extracted, was not so much the titular German author, but rather the young British intellectual. At the very least, as with Hyndman and Engels’s remarks on Rodbertus, if Bax was not the main target he was almost certainly intentionally implicated.

Bax exchanged fire with Engels properly, if not explicitly, in *The Problem of Reality*. In ‘The New Ethic’, by contrast, Bax pursued a separate objective. Instead of putting Engels and others right on questions of metaphysics, he directed his attention there to the ethical misconceptions of the ‘old metaphysical schools’ and their ‘modern semi-theological’ equivalents and to the so-called ‘modern Empiricists’. Insofar as Bax attacked both groups for their ahistoricity, he and Engels were in agreement. But, unlike Engels, Bax also had much in common with the objects of his critique – not least, in the value they assigned to religion.

⁷⁹⁹ Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, pp. 29, 30.

⁸⁰⁰ Bernstein, *My Years in Exile*, p. 201.

Bax sought, above all, to combat the moral prescriptions of the British Idealists. He wanted to reveal that, notwithstanding their ostensible collectivism, the ethic propounded by Green and his followers was no less individualistic than ‘the empirical or utilitarian’ theory.⁸⁰¹ It was precisely because the Idealists offered a more persuasive account of the nature of ‘the social organism’ and the individual’s responsibility to it than Bentham or Mill that Bax felt the need to puncture any such misplaced pretensions.⁸⁰² It was, in short, the proximity of the ideas formulated by the Idealists to some of Bax’s own that motivated him to provide a response. Like Pearson and other misguided social reformers, the British Idealists were guilty of muddying the waters of prospective social change by offering naive and improbable solutions.

In ‘The New Ethic’ Bax stated his case in abstract terms. The names of the individual theorists whom he had in mind as representative of the beliefs he attacked were mainly omitted. Yet the targets were clear enough, nonetheless. Bax complained, firstly, that both ‘the ordinary spiritualistic theory, and the ordinary materialistic theory, alike regard morality as having for its end – the individual.’⁸⁰³ ‘Self interest’, he averred, ‘is the keynote of both moral systems.’⁸⁰⁴ On the one hand, ‘The theological or spiritualistic system apotheosises the “soul;” its method being a continuous introspection or communing of the individual with this apotheosised self; on the other hand, ‘The empirical or utilitarian system apotheosises “self-interest,” which for it is the ultimate fact in human nature.’⁸⁰⁵ Besides a shared telos, ‘both these theories’, Bax continued, ‘treat Ethic as a fact to be

⁸⁰¹ Bax, ‘The New Ethic’, p. 2.

⁸⁰² Ibid.

⁸⁰³ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

explained apart from the concrete synthesis of human nature to which it belongs.’⁸⁰⁶

Bax isolated Comte and Spencer as exceptions. They at least did not treat morality in a trans-historical way, instead of deducing it from ‘general social evolution’.⁸⁰⁷ However, ‘the empirical method’ which they adopted debarred them, at the same time, from gaining ‘any real insight into the matter’:

The mere collation of the phenomena of the moral consciousness, and the forcing of them into accordance with the fundamental assumption that the antagonism of self interest and social interest is ultimate, and that morality must always imply a conscious effort to reconcile the two – can never afford any but a one-sided and fallacious view of things.⁸⁰⁸

Bax disagreed widely with the philosophy of the British Idealists. But here Bax’s argument coincided with the position put by Henry Jones in a recent volume of essays dedicated to the memory of Green, co-edited by Bax’s friend Haldane, and published in 1883. Although Bax continued to admire Spencer, he and the Idealists were in accord in insisting that,

we must... get rid of the notion that society is in the last resort, merely an *aggregate* of individuals, with its necessary corollary, that there must always exist a latent or overt opposition between individual and community; in short, that the category individual has any meaning *per se* and separated from the category community or society.⁸⁰⁹

There was little difference between Bax and Green and his followers when it came to the significance they attributed to society for the development and realisation of the individual. Nor were they much at odds as to what constituted ‘the highest moral ambition’ – to sacrifice ‘particular ends’, as

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

Jones put it, for the sake of ‘the social organism’.⁸¹⁰ They were also in accord in viewing history as a meaningful process. But Bax objected to Idealist ethical theory in two fundamental ways.

Firstly, Bax protested at its fragility. ‘The individual and his god,’ Bax opined, ‘though professedly distinct, are really one and the same.’⁸¹¹ To forge a morality centred in divine disclosure was therefore ill-advised, to put it mildly. For no sooner than its fictitious Christian basis should collapse, with creeping secularisation, the reason that it provided for the pursuit of the common good – the actualisation of God’s will – would be rendered redundant.⁸¹² In the second instance, the Idealists, according to Bax, grossly misjudged the capacity of individuals to exercise ‘free-will’, or to act in a moral way under their own volition. Bax occupied a position between Spencer and the Idealists on the spectrum of moral possibility. Bax neither accepted the necessitarian perspective of Spencer, which essentially denied agency to individual actors in society, nor did he endorse the anti-Spencerian arguments of Green and his acolytes, who adopted an equally exaggerated stance.⁸¹³ Patently, men and women did not just passively reflect the conditions of their social being, or adapt submissively to their environment; but, at the same time, to suggest, as Jones did, that ‘man is free... his own limit, his own necessity, his own fate’ was nothing short of

⁸¹⁰ Henry Jones, ‘The Social Organism’, in David Boucher (ed.), *The British Idealists* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 10. The essay was first published in Andrew Seth and R. B. Haldane (ed.), *Essays in Philosophical Criticism* (London, Longmans, Green and Co, 1883).

⁸¹¹ Bax, ‘The New Ethic’, p. 7.

⁸¹² Vincent and Plant summarised Green’s views – views echoed by most of the British Idealists – in the following terms: ‘for Green the relationship between God and the individual is to be found in moral endeavour. Moral activity is determined by an ideal which the agent presents to himself. In pursuing this end which is not actually present in reality I identify myself with it and so desire to be something which I conceive myself as capable of becoming... Morality is a matter of self-realization in the sense of continually attempting to bring into being this desirable and possible self. This possible self, the telos of moral endeavour is identified by Green with God.’ *Philosophy, Politics, and Citizenship*, pp. 14-15.

⁸¹³ See the ‘Introduction’ in T. H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1907).

preposterous.⁸¹⁴ The moral 'ought', of which the Idealists made so much, Bax argued, had strict limits. To be sure, individuals were capable of praiseworthy and blameworthy actions. But, Bax counselled, reformers should 'seek not the ideal society through the ideal individual, but conversely the ideal individual through the ideal society.'⁸¹⁵ To do otherwise was to profoundly misjudge the importance of 'social surroundings'.⁸¹⁶

Like Engels, with whom, as we shall see in Chapter 9, Bax also differed on the question of individual agency, Bax tied all ethical belief systems to an economic base. For example, 'The empirical utilitarian theory of the British school' was, he insisted, 'no more than the speculative formulation or expression of the principle obtaining under that competitive capitalism, which reached its earliest development in the Anglo-Saxon race of modern times'.⁸¹⁷ Eliding complexity for the sake of rhetorical effect, he dubbed the concept of 'enlightened self-interest' 'the formulated Ethic of the full belly and the full pocket'.⁸¹⁸ It was, in short, he held, a subjective, bourgeois charade, whose days were numbered. Moreover, 'The other and equally individualistic theory, that of the theologians,' though not so obviously derivative of the same source was 'none the less really so'.⁸¹⁹ However much the middle classes 'occupied themselves with the endeavour to find out every conceivable compromise by which they might evade overtly breaking with the speculative tradition' – the Positivists providing only the most clear-cut example of that undertaking – its days were no less clearly through.⁸²⁰

⁸¹⁴ Jones, 'The Social Organism', p. 14.

⁸¹⁵ Bax, 'The New Ethic', p. 19.

⁸¹⁶ Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, p. x.

⁸¹⁷ Bax, 'The New Ethic', p. 8.

⁸¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18

⁸¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁸²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

As Bax had sought to show in 'Universal History', the 'individualistic ethic' had lost its economic base.⁸²¹ Its reason for being had therefore vanished too. Bax argued that a new, 'objective social morality' had begun to take shape.⁸²² It consisted, he wrote in 'The New Ethic', 'in a sense of oneness with the social body', or, differently put, 'in an identification of self-interest with social interest'.⁸²³ It was underpinned by the fact that,

The whole life of the working classes of to-day under the conditions of the great industry is a collective one, inasmuch as the labour of the individual is merged in the labour of the group; the group again in that of other groups, and so on throughout the entire industrial and commercial system.⁸²⁴

Owing to these unprecedented structural conditions, Bax averred that traces of the 'New Ethic' were present already 'even in the working classes of to-day'.⁸²⁵ It would not, however, become general until the new mode of production, the source from which it originated, still germinating within the old, had been fully realised. The 'New Ethic', as Bax conceived it, was the religion of the modern socialist system in its completed state. Thus, while the Russian Nihilist or Paris workman, 'in deliberately exposing himself to certain death, believing in no personal immortality, that is, in no sort of continual existence for himself as individual, for the sake of human brotherhood,' embodied 'the highest expression of the new ethic the world' had 'yet seen', the 'New Ethic of Socialism' would exhibit 'for the first time in the world's history the conscious sacrifice of the individual to the social whole' as a matter of course.⁸²⁶

Unlike Mill, Bax had no concerns about the rapidity with which the principle of self-sacrifice could be inserted as a substitute for the principle

⁸²¹ Ibid., p. 16.

⁸²² Ibid., p. 18.

⁸²³ Ibid.

⁸²⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

⁸²⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

⁸²⁶ Ibid., pp. 22, 21.

of self-interest, or rather about the prospect of harmonising the two. At the same time, that is not to say that Bax was apt to romanticise the working classes as he perceived them. On the contrary, ‘Mere class-instinct’, he argued, ‘can never give us Socialism.’⁸²⁷ ‘All class character’, he continued, ‘*qua* class character is bad.’⁸²⁸ But, he conceded, confronting the dilemma that arose from the preceding admissions head-on, ‘In no human being born in a class society can the class-element be altogether absent from his character.’⁸²⁹

Bax distinguished between two sets of qualities, the social and the anti-social. The first belonged to what he described as ‘the specifically human nature’ that ‘presided over the institution of tribal society’, whereas the second belonged to the ‘pre-human nature’ that preceded it, but which human nature had inherited nonetheless.⁸³⁰ The ‘social qualities’, he claimed, had ‘maintained themselves only in spite of the class-system’, and the ‘human or social character *varies in an inverse* proportion to the class or anti-social character of the man.’⁸³¹ By virtue, however, of their unique position in the social structure, Bax averred that there was ‘a large section’ of the working classes ‘among whom the mere class-qualities’ had in fact ‘to a large extent succumbed to’ their opposite number, namely the ‘human qualities,’ even though ‘they necessarily and directly’ continued to ‘take a class *form*.’⁸³²

It was precisely the genesis of these ‘public and social feelings’ – however inevitably partial – that Mill apparently overlooked in his *Chapters*, and that led him, in consequence, to ostensibly exaggerate the

⁸²⁷ Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘Man versus Classes’, in *Ethics of Socialism*, p. 104.

⁸²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 100.

⁸³² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

length of time needed to address ‘the general infirmity’ in that area.⁸³³ For Mill, however, even had he agreed with Bax’s drastically more sanguine estimation of current moral fitness, ‘on which’, they concurred, ‘the success of Communism depends’, a ‘practical trial’ would still be required.⁸³⁴ ‘Experiments alone’, he argued, could show if ‘Communist associations’ could be ‘durable and prosperous’; they would ‘multiply’ or terminate according to their failure or success on that basis.⁸³⁵ Political revolution, in short, was not an option.

Bax, by contrast, showed none of Mill’s caution, opting rather for a strategy that temporarily accentuated and exacerbated the ‘class-feeling’ that both he and Mill condemned. In a passage that applied more fully to Mill’s Fabian, Idealist, and New Liberal successors than to Mill himself, Bax wrote that,

Classes exist; you may ignore them, but they exist still with the respective characters that they engender. Though you ignore them they will not ignore you. The difference between the Socialist and the benevolent bourgeois Radical in their respective crusades against classes is, that while the one would affirm the *form* of class-distinction, knowing that thereby the *reality* of class-distinction will be negated, the other, though ostentatiously denying the *form* of class-distinction, would affirm the *content* or *reality* of class-distinction, inasmuch as he would leave it untouched.⁸³⁶

In other words, Bax continued to pay no heed to Mill’s exhortations against revolutionary action. Unlike Pearson and other contemporary advocates of gradualism, Bax argued, instead, that ‘we may expect to see the end of *Classes*... and the beginning of *Men*’ only after ‘one more decisive affirmation of class-interest’, that is to say, after a political revolution with the working class at its helm had been achieved.⁸³⁷

⁸³³ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 263. Mill, *Representative Government*, p. 245.

⁸³⁴ Mill, *Chapters*., p. 271.

⁸³⁵ Ibid.

⁸³⁶ Bax, ‘Man versus Classes’, p. 103.

⁸³⁷ Ibid., p. 105.

9

The Problem of Reality

Bax's religion of Socialism was thus clearly at odds with the other exclusively class-neutral variants of progressive religion on offer in late-nineteenth century Britain – whether it be Positivist, Idealist, or some other more inchoate species. To have invoked the concept at all, however, also revealed a less intellectually self-sufficient side to Bax, which could otherwise be obscured when set alongside Engels and his colleagues in the burgeoning Continental Socialist movement alone. To be sure, in the context of Continental Social Democracy Bax was travelling against the grain of what was fast-becoming established convention. But when situated within the context of Victorian intellectual life between the 1850s and 1880s the ethical and religious 'bent' of Bax's mind looked by no means out of place.⁸³⁸

Raphael Samuel attributed Bax's appetite for questions of 'social morality' and 'secular faith' to his Nonconformist upbringing.⁸³⁹ And it is, indeed, plausible that Bax's religious background predisposed him towards a certain evangelicalism in his formulation of Socialist theory, just as many of the Idealists, who came from similar religious backgrounds, were predisposed towards 'the idea of doing 'good works' in society'.⁸⁴⁰ Even so, once it is recognised how widespread 'the sensibility which found something repugnant in even the hint of self-regarding actions' was among

⁸³⁸ Samuel, 'British Marxist Historians', p. 44

⁸³⁹ Ibid., p. 43. Samuel argued: 'The notion of sacrifice seems to have exerted a particular fascination on him – socialism itself was an act of renunciation, 'the conscious sacrifice of the individual to the social whole' – and it is one he often returns to.' Ibid.

⁸⁴⁰ Boucher, 'Introduction', p. xi.

mid- to late-Victorian intellectuals, such an exceedingly personal explanation becomes unnecessary.⁸⁴¹ As Stefan Collini noted, Oscar Wilde's somewhat flippant contribution to the literature on Socialism in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1891 provided 'one obvious source of evidence for the sense that the demands of an altruism-centred morality had' become, for some, 'oppressive'.⁸⁴²

In that respect, at least, then, Bax was an exponent of convention. He endorsed the 'culture of altruism', so aptly named by Collini, which took off with Comte's assistance in the 1850s.⁸⁴³ That being the case it should come as small surprise that Bax, unlike Shaw, and other slightly later Socialist avant-gardists, showed no interest in Nietzsche, the figurehead for many of those who rejected the moral culture that they inherited – most notably, the editors of the *New Age*, Alfred Orage and Holbrook Jackson, significantly younger men.⁸⁴⁴ Of course, it was not that Bax was in any way averse to iconoclastic new theories, as his interest in Marx, Schopenhauer, and Wagner attests. Indeed, he continued to praise Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's own philosophical master, introducing a new edition of some his work in 1891. Bax also incorporated insights from Schopenhauer's

⁸⁴¹ Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 82.

⁸⁴² Ibid., p. 88. Here, it seems apt to quote Beatrice Webb's endlessly recycled utterance. She wrote: 'I suggest it was during the middle decades of the nineteenth century that, in England, the impulse of self-subordinating service was transferred, consciously and overtly, from God to man.' *My Apprenticeship* (London, Penguin, 1971), p. 158. Moreover, her future husband, Sidney Webb, provided an equally pertinent, but far less widely circulated remark in *Fabian Essays*. The 'perfect and fitting development of each individual is not necessarily the utmost and highest cultivation of his own personality,' he argued, 'but the filling, in the best possible way, of his humble function in the great social machine. We must abandon the self-conceit of imagining that we are independent units, and bend our jealous minds, absorbed in their own cultivation, to this subjection of the higher end, the Common Weal.' 'Historic', p. 90. Not surprisingly, prior to becoming a Socialist, Webb, of course, was 'an avowed exponent of Comtian Positivism'. Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, p. 184.

⁸⁴³ Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 89.

⁸⁴⁴ See David S. Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1970); and Livesey, *Socialism, Sex, and the Culture of Aestheticism*. Ch. 6.

philosophy into his own work at that time, informing, above all, elements of *The Problem of Reality*.⁸⁴⁵ Bax, however, never relented in his defence of altruism, the concept that enjoyed such great currency within the more staid domain of Victorian intellectual culture. There was, in his view, nothing wrong with the concept itself, only the way that it was deployed by its most fervent advocates. Simply stated, Bax held that much the same kind of hypocrisy at work in the denial of the existence of classes obtained here too. That is to say, while the principle of individualism had been ‘*formally* surrendered’ by Comte’s British disciples as well as its detractors in the Idealist camp, it had been ‘*really* maintained’.⁸⁴⁶ Masquerading as a singularly selfless ethic, the Idealist doctrine of self-realisation, he implied, was particularly insidious, amounting, when properly scrutinized, to ‘a double-dyed egoism’, or ‘individualism to the Nth degree’.⁸⁴⁷

In addition to the strikes against the Idealists deposited in ‘The New Ethic’, like the one documented above, Bax took up the cudgel against the Idealists again in *The Problem of Reality*. There, however, he made no attempt to conceal the object of his criticism. Instead, he subjected the Idealist theory to an *explicit* and, by nature of the book’s character, far more wide-ranging critique. At the same time, he also filled in some of the gaps of his proposed alternative, as he left it in ‘The New Ethic’, returning to some of the themes expounded over a decade before in ‘The Ideal of the Future’. The unusual metaphysical argument that he outlined in *The Problem of Reality* performed a double polemical service. Not only did it serve to undermine the philosophical objections to Hedonism posited by Green and his followers, it also functioned, secondly, as an implicit challenge to Engels

⁸⁴⁵ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Selected Essays of Arthur Schopenhauer. With a Biographical Introduction and sketch of his philosophy by Ernest Belfort Bax* (London, G. Bell & Sons, 1891).

⁸⁴⁶ Bax, ‘The New Ethic’, p. 7.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid.

and his protégés in the movement of European Social Democracy. Moreover, despite their apparent incongruity, these goals were actually closely linked. In the process of sorting the wheat from the chaff in the metaphysic propounded by the Idealists, Bax found a means to address, in a non-confrontational way, what he felt were the numerous shortcomings of what he began to describe a short time later as ‘the orthodox Marxist position’.⁸⁴⁸

In a work of conspicuous singularity, to say that one of the most striking features of *The Problem of Reality*, Bax’s first book-length work of philosophy, is the continuity that it evinces with ‘The Ideal of the Future’, the two-part essay that he wrote for *Modern Thought* over ten years earlier, is no small thing.⁸⁴⁹ Certainly, the argument he set out in 1892 had been sharply refined. In the new book, Bax heavily revised the technical side of his thesis. By that time, as we have seen, he was, moreover, well-equipped for that task. In contrast to the disorderly use made of Kant and others in the previous effort, Bax could now navigate the history of philosophy with exceptional ease, no longer having to rely on the second-hand appraisals

⁸⁴⁸ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 47.

⁸⁴⁹ Reviewing a later elaboration of the themes posited by Bax in *The Problem of Reality* – namely *The Roots of Reality*, the aforementioned book dedicated to Juarès – Arthur O. Lovejoy remarked that, ‘the book will appear, to the collector of historic types of transitional doctrine, a curious and interesting hybrid’. *The Philosophical Review*, 18/1 (1909), pp. 79-80. More recently, Mark Bevir accorded recognition to the singularity of Bax’s philosophy. Bevir assessed Bax’s work in a favourable light next to the work of the English philosopher, historian, and archaeologist, R. G. Collingwood. ‘Universality and particularity in the philosophy of E. B. Bax and R. G. Collingwood’, *History of the Human Sciences*, 12/3 (1999), pp. 55-69. It is also worth pointing out here that Bevir provides an extremely pithy exposition of Bax’s philosophy in *The Making of British Socialism* (pp. 50-56). He does so, however, without regard to chronology on the one hand, or the various fields of controversy that Bax was embroiled in on the other. It stands only, that is to say, as a rational reconstruction.

provided in the synthetic work of G. H. Lewes and others.⁸⁵⁰ However, the basic thread of argument remained constant. Condensed to its foremost constituent – namely, the posited evolution of a collective consciousness and the formulation of an ethic that could properly account for it – the contention elaborated in ‘The Ideal of the Future’ abided, to an uncanny extent, intact.

Naturally, *The Problem of Reality* was a much more ambitious work. In fact, it more or less represented the consummation of all of Bax’s main ideas – historical, philosophical, and political – up until the date of its publication. By its very nature, it was, to be sure, an abstract treatment. But Bax had dealt with many of those ideas elsewhere, during the course of the preceding ten years, in a series of more concrete interventions – the historical account that Bax wrote of the role played by Jean Paul Marat in the French revolution, for example, and his contributions to political theory and organisational design. In *The Problem of Reality*, he revisited two themes, in particular, at greater length or more methodically than before: the issue of scientism and the issue of determinism. Taking ‘The Ideal of the Future’ as a base, on the first of these themes, Bax brought much greater precision to his analysis, having discarded Spencer’s ‘almost’ dualistic epistemology, and situated himself between Hegel and Kant instead.⁸⁵¹ On the second, he effected a complete rupture, creating considerable space for the role of the individual in history. For the subsequent reception of Bax as a thinker, both were ominous moves.

⁸⁵⁰ See Willis, ‘The Introduction and Critical Reception of Hegelian Thought’, pp. 98–99.

⁸⁵¹ Bax, *Handbook*, p. 380.

It is perfectly possible to read *The Problem of Reality* as a rejoinder to, and would-be alternative for, Engels's text, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, which, as we heard earlier, contained a number of speech acts aimed in Bax's direction. In that pamphlet, soon to become 'a canonical source of Marxist philosophy', Engels sought to establish what he portentously described there (conjoining the view of Marx with his own) as 'our relation' to classical German philosophy.⁸⁵² It was a view that not only did not cohere, but actively conflicted with Bax's. Putting his pronouncements on Kant, religion, the conditions of happiness, and chance in history temporarily to one side, the death warrant that Engels reissued there for 'philosophy as such' was perhaps bound to antagonise into action a Socialist so deeply steeped in, and appreciative of, both philosophy in general, and German idealism in particular.⁸⁵³

In his autobiography Bax complained that 'Engels showed a tendency to regard all other studies and departments of knowledge... as appendices of his own special department, i.e. Political Economy'; and in *The Problem of Reality* he wasted no time in signalling the inadequacy of Engels's position:

The following pages contain suggestions for a reconstruction of the Philosophical Problem and for its solution, taking it up at the point at which it was left by the classical philosophical schools of Germany. To designate the subject-matter of the Problem, I have sometimes used the word "Metaphysic" for the sake of convenience. It would be useless to be deterred from this by any fear lest the ordinary philistine should, at the mere use of the word, be thrown into convulsions. Of course, its bare mention will cause him to froth at the mouth with inept common-places as to the impossibility of any science other than that of "phenomena." He will kindly enunciate for you a variety of unimpeachable propositions, all as true as they are *trivial*, which he considers crushing, and which would indeed be so, had they anything whatsoever to do with the point under discussion... Those who dislike the term "Metaphysic"

⁸⁵² Rockmore, 'Engels, Lukacs, and Kant's Thing-in-itself', pp. 148-149. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 2.

⁸⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

may call it “Theory of Knowledge,” but there is no point gained by doing so. It is open to anyone to allege want of interest in the Problem, but not to deny that the Problem obtains.⁸⁵⁴

In short, philosophy, according to Bax, was not ‘an extinct science’.⁸⁵⁵ He refused to accept that it had been ‘expelled from nature and history’, and that its only remaining domain was ‘pure thought’.⁸⁵⁶ He proposed, instead, an alternative route out of classical German philosophy to that suggested by Engels and, as he understood it, Marx, which left many of the basic presuppositions of thinkers like Hegel and Kant intact, including the notion (also accepted by Marx the historical figure) that ‘there can be no real apprehension of the world without its alteration, no perception without action on the object perceived.’⁸⁵⁷

In a tactical calculation, Bax combined the chiding remarks that he levelled at Engels – which often went to the core of the latter’s system of belief – with criticism of Comte. He did so in an effort to obfuscate and take the sting from his most vituperative utterances, like the one cited above. For example, as Terrell Carver noted, Engels’s ‘notion of metaphysics was unusual in that he defined it as particular philosophical position’ as opposed to the more conventional meaning that Bax attributed to it in the passage quoted.⁸⁵⁸ Thus, in this instance, Comte could take the heat as ‘the ordinary philistine’ at the same time as Engels was implicated for

⁸⁵⁴ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 47. Bax, *Problem of Reality*, pp. 1-2, 4. ‘The superficiality of Engels’s understanding of idealism did not go unnoticed at the time’, Stedman Jones observed, speaking of an earlier period. ‘According to Henrich Burgers, one of Marx’s closest companions from Cologne, Engels’s ‘aversion to philosophy and speculation derive much less from an insight into their nature than from the discomfort which they have produced in his not very persevering mind’. Engels, he thought, probably resolved to protect himself from this discomfort in the future by ‘the exorcism of contempt’ and setting himself a descriptive task.’ ‘History and Nature in Karl Marx’, p. 103.

⁸⁵⁵ Bax, *Problem of Reality*, p. 6.

⁸⁵⁶ Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 59.

⁸⁵⁷ Thomas, *Marxism and Scientific Socialism*, p. 33. For a short account of Marx’s relationship to the idealist tradition in philosophy see, also, Stedman Jones, ‘History and Nature in Karl Marx’, pp. 98-117.

⁸⁵⁸ Carver, *Engels*, p. 60.

committing roughly the same misdemeanours. For while Comte alone deployed the term ‘metaphysical’ as a catch-all pejorative, they were both equally committed to the scientism that underpinned Comte’s derisive use of the word.⁸⁵⁹

Notwithstanding such subtle (or not so subtle) evasions, the Social Democrats of the Second International, now an organised force to be reckoned with in a number of European countries, could scarcely have failed to take the point that Bax was making. Four years before the so-called Revisionist Controversy got underway in *Die Neue Zeit* – inaugurated by Bax himself, and during which the terms ‘Marxist’ and ‘Marxism’ were ‘officially consecrated’ – Bax offered an intellectual alternative to the theory proffered by Engels in Marx’s name.⁸⁶⁰ Well in advance of the similarly critical questions posed by Bernstein, a *dissimilarly* celebrated episode in the career of the tradition of thought that encompassed them both, Bax also attempted in *The Problem of Reality* to unsettle what had become some of the foremost components of the so-called ‘Marxist world outlook’ – above all, its positivism, its one-sided ‘materialist doctrine of history’, and its theory of economic collapse.⁸⁶¹ For those who spoke the same incipient political language, his intentions can only have been transparent. Moreover, it was a timely intervention. On the one hand, it followed the Erfurt Programme, which embodied the ‘broad position advocated by Engels’, and, more particularly, his ideas about the collapse of capitalism, by just a single year; and, on the other, it was published alongside the first English edition

⁸⁵⁹ Comte developed the idea of the Law of Three Stages. He named the second of those stages the metaphysical. Thinking during that second stage was characterised by its abstract nature, whereas the stage that succeeded it, the positive, was characterised by its application of the scientific method. Hence, Comte repeatedly referred to ‘metaphysical schemers’, and ‘metaphysical Utopians’ in his work. *A General View of Positivism*, p. 132.

⁸⁶⁰ See Tudor and Tudor (eds.), *Marxism and Social Democracy*. Haupt, ‘Marx and Marxism’, p. 282.

⁸⁶¹ Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, pp. 565–566.

of Engels's prodigiously influential text, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*.⁸⁶² The latter translation, furthermore, included a new introduction by Engels; and in it he attacked Bax's critique of 'historical materialism'.

In the new introduction Engels noted how in Britain, while 'the word materialism grates upon the ears of the immense majority', agnosticism, by contrast, 'might be tolerated'; 'though not yet considered 'the thing' quite as much as the Church of England,' it 'is yet very nearly on a par', he wrote, 'as far as respectability goes, with Baptism, and decidedly ranks above the Salvation Army.'⁸⁶³ No doubt, to the uninitiated, in these remarks Engels would seem to have been invoking T. H. Huxley, the author of that newly minted word, and the other public moralists like him who had also embraced the position to which his neologism referred. In making that assumption, they would, besides, be partly right. Engels was attacking the growing number of middle class advocates of agnosticism in Britain.⁸⁶⁴ Yet Bax also described himself as an 'agnostic'; and the substance of the criticism that followed was, in fact, very obviously levelled at him.⁸⁶⁵ Engels, to be sure, played fast and loose with the *actual* objections that Bax had made to what he described in an essay published the year before *The Problem of Reality* as 'the cruder materialism'. But Engels's complaints, some of which had already been set out in *Ludwig Feuerbach*, were no less

⁸⁶² Tudor and Tudor (eds.), *Marxism and Social Democracy*, p. 7.

⁸⁶³ Engels, *Socialism*, pp. 29, 33.

⁸⁶⁴ Like Henry Sidgwick, for example, who had presided over the Society for Psychical Research twice over since 1882, or William Stewart Ross, who changed the name of the *Secular Review* in 1888 to the *Agnostic Journal*. Royle, *Radicals, Secularists, and Republicans*, pp. 115-116. Stefan Collini, 'Sidgwick, Henry (1838-1900)', *ODNB*. W. B. Owen and H. C. G. Matthew, 'Ross, William Stewart (1844-1906)', *ODNB*.

⁸⁶⁵ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 26.

patently intended for Bax, who in the meantime had become a thorn in his side intellectually.⁸⁶⁶

Engels started by insisting that what passed for agnosticism was, in most cases, merely a “shamefaced’ materialism’, and he isolated three ‘formal mental observations’ that ‘our agnostic’ makes before ‘he talks and acts as the rank materialist he at bottom is.’⁸⁶⁷ The first ‘formal mental observation’ that Engels identified was the refusal to rule out the possibility of ‘the existence of some Supreme Being beyond the known universe’; the second was the claim that sense perception was an unreliable guide to ascertaining the real character of the objects we perceive; and the third was the belief in Kant’s concept of the ‘thing-in-itself’, the existence, that is, of an unknowable, noumenal sphere wholly beyond the grasp of human sensation.⁸⁶⁸ Engels himself had little patience for these reservations. He viewed them as an elaborate time-wasting exercise. Thus, he wrapped up his brief rebuttal (-cum-elusion) of each with the following concluding remark:

even if I was an agnostic, it is evident that I could not describe the conception of history sketched out in this little book as ‘historical agnosticism’. Religious people would laugh at me, agnostics would indignantly ask: Was I going to make fun of them? And thus I hope even British respectability will not be overshocked if I use, in English as in so many other languages, the term ‘historical materialism’, to designate that view of the course of history which seeks the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all important historic events in the economic developments of society, in the changes in the modes of production and exchange, in the consequent division of society into distinct classes, and in the struggle of those classes against one another.⁸⁶⁹

If Engels refused to accept the cogency of the three ‘formal mental observations’ that he set out, and poured scorn on the very notion of

⁸⁶⁶ Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘The Practical Significance of Philosophy’, in *Outlooks from the New Standpoint* (London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1891), p. 188.

⁸⁶⁷ Engels, *Socialism*, pp. 33, 36.

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 34, 35.

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

accommodating any of those views to his theory, Bax was more indulgent. He subscribed to the first two reservations, had a complicated relationship to the third, and, as a consequence of the vantage-point he gained in striking those postures, rejected the theory of 'historical materialism' as it was presented by Engels. He was guilty, in short, of the nominally faux position-taking that Engels abhorred.

For example, in the first instance, in his autobiography, Bax derided the 'dogmatism' of 'the early and mid-Victorian man of education' in matters of 'the supernormal'; 'however much we may regard the balance of probabilities as being against the affirmative side', he wrote, peremptory pronouncements on either side of the question were 'scientifically indefensible'.⁸⁷⁰ Secondly, in the suggestively titled essay, 'The Practical Significance of Philosophy', Bax warned against conflating 'the "truth" of science' with 'Reality'.⁸⁷¹ In opposition to Engels, he argued that, 'Philosophy shows the categories of science to be inadequate, as having the particularity of being or sense still cleaving to them.'⁸⁷² And, finally, Bax conceded that to 'treat the thing-in-itself as a thing existing and yet independent of all possible apprehension is... absurd.'⁸⁷³ However, unlike Engels's facile dismissal of Kant, Bax handled the theory fairly, taking it, and Hegel's relationship to it, as a starting-point for the discussion of his own metaphysic. To cap it all, as in 'The Ideal of the Future', Bax repudiated in 'The Practical Significance of Philosophy' the idealist-materialist dichotomy so insistently championed by Engels. Bax described it as a 'vulgar' division.⁸⁷⁴ In the same essay, furthermore, he denounced Engels's use of 'the dialectical method without metaphysic' as having 'no basis and

⁸⁷⁰ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 26.

⁸⁷¹ Bax, *Problem of Reality*, p. 106.

⁸⁷² Bax, 'The Practical Significance of Philosophy', p. 191.

⁸⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁸⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

therefore no justification as an instrument of research.’⁸⁷⁵ Hence, all things considered, it would be fair to say that he had, in short, earned a dressing-down. Moreover, it was not just a question of intellectual pride. The practical bearing of the European Socialist movement was also at stake.

Like Engels, Bax held that the dialectic was a ‘key’ with which to ‘unlock the innermost secret of every reality’ – not just ‘in anthropology’ and ‘psychology’, as he had shown in the essays ‘Universal History’ and ‘The New Ethic’, but ‘in physics’ and ‘in biology’ too.⁸⁷⁶ On this, there was no dispute between them. For Bax, however, the dialectic could only be deduced by philosophy from ‘the primary synthesis of the consciousness’, or, in Kant’s words – which Bax used interchangeably with his own – from ‘the unity of apperception’.⁸⁷⁷ The failure to acknowledge its source rendered ‘the dialectical method’ comparable, Bax wrote, to ‘a tree cut away from its roots’, namely barren and without a ‘locus standi’.⁸⁷⁸ Further, the ‘difficulty of the ordinary man in getting rid of the absurd notion... that the “mind” merely apprehends a Reality subsisting in itself, independent, not only of his own mind but of Consciousness altogether’, also rested, he argued, upon the ‘inability to grasp the cardinal distinction’ between the “I” and its negation in ‘feeling’ in Kant’s theory.⁸⁷⁹ That is to say, the ‘metaphysical problem’ was not of incidental significance. It was, rather, of considerable ‘practical importance’.⁸⁸⁰ For not only did it furnish the proper method by which reality could be known, it shed light, too, via further analysis of ‘the act of apprehension’, on the ultimate basis and telos of

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 187.

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁹ Bax, *Problem of Reality*, pp. 26-27.

⁸⁸⁰ Bax, ‘The Practical Significance of Philosophy’, p. 192.

human action, as well as the extent to which Law or Chance could be said to govern the course of human history.⁸⁸¹ The practical ramifications of the first of these theoretical by-products – namely, the *ontological* upshot – enmeshed the ethical standpoint propounded by the Idealists. The consequences of the second, meanwhile, bore down, in the main, on the political strategy that Engels promoted, a strategy also endorsed by Second International Socialist leaders like Kautsky and Bebel.

According to Bax, ‘Reality in its simplest and broadest expression’ implied ‘three elements’:

(1) an “I” feeling, which constitutes the possibility of apprehending; (2) a “Feltness,” or the negation of this “I” as such, constituting the possibility of apprehendedness; and (3) the reciprocal determination or fixation of the “felt-ness” by that which feels and conversely. It is this third or formal element of reciprocal relation, which we term Thought, the category, the logical, and in it Consciousness is complete in its simplest aspect.⁸⁸²

‘This primal synthesis’, he wrote, ‘alone constitutes reality.’⁸⁸³ To be sure, ‘any man with any pretension to culture is a materialist’, Bax conceded – adding grist to the mill of Engels’s incredulous stance – but, he quickly added, that left ‘the metaphysical problem precisely where it was before, matter and motion themselves being simply general terms for sensation differentiated and synthesised by thought, and apprehended by the Ego.’⁸⁸⁴ For Bax, the “I” of apperception could be legitimately ‘described as the Absolute’.⁸⁸⁵ Unlike ‘the other primary members of the synthesis’, it alone had ‘a noumenal value’.⁸⁸⁶ Neither matter nor mind, on this view, was ‘ultimate’, ‘but alike’ owed ‘their reality to their apprehension or

⁸⁸¹ Ibid., p. 180.

⁸⁸² Bax, *The Problem of Reality*, p. 29.

⁸⁸³ Bax, ‘The Practical Significance of Philosophy’, p. 182.

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 188.

⁸⁸⁵ Bax, *Problem of Reality*, p. 49.

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 48.

apprehensibility, which, again,' Bax wrote, 'merely means that they are in the last sense the self-determinations or functions (objects) of an "I."' ⁸⁸⁷

Borrowing from the conceptual repertory established by Hartmann, Bax termed the second and third clauses in the act of apprehension – namely, the element of Feeling and the element of Thought – the *alogical* and the *logical*.⁸⁸⁸ The first was 'through and through particular', he explained, the other, owing to its mediatisation in language, 'through and through universal.'⁸⁸⁹ It was precisely this second clause, Bax held – the alogical element – that Kant had expelled to the realm of the unknowable in the concept of the thing-in-itself. It was precisely that, too, that rendered Kant's otherwise compelling theory of knowledge unsound. In opposition to Kant, Bax argued that, since 'the word "Reality"... involves the notion of apprehensibility... a Reality that by its very nature, cannot become a content of Consciousness or be known, is a contradiction in terms.'⁸⁹⁰ Yet, if 'the notion of the thing-in-itself, that is to say, a thing existing outside all possible consciousness,' was 'a manifest absurdity', that did not mean that Hegel's resolution of the problem was any more convincing; certainly, it was 'scarcely more absurd than the reduction of reality to a mere logical process, a mere thinking and nothing more.'⁸⁹¹

Taking up the 'bold step' taken in this regard by Hegel and his followers, Bax averred that, 'though there may be no thing-in-itself, there is undoubtedly an in-itselfness in the thing, that is, in Reality.'⁸⁹² 'The clumsy objection of the man of "commonsense" and of the empirical psychologist, that out of *Thought* alone *Thing* can never be deduced, represents,' he

⁸⁸⁷ Bax, 'The Practical Significance of Philosophy', pp. 188-189.

⁸⁸⁸ Bax, *The Problem of Reality*, p. 22.

⁸⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37. Bax, 'The Practical Significance of Philosophy', p. 182.

⁸⁹² Bax, *The Problem of Reality*, p. 37.

argued, ‘a hard fact against which pan-logism dashes itself in vain’.⁸⁹³ Bax advised against confounding ‘the great truth’ of transcendentalism – namely, the truth ‘that Consciousness... embraces the whole problem of existence, and that only by a confusion of thought do men suppose a problem outside of it’ – with ‘Hegel’s identification of the whole process with the Thought or concept-factor involved in it.’⁸⁹⁴ He continued:

By what right do we dogmatically exclude the material elements in the synthesis... in favour of mere formal activity as Thought-determination? Surely “common-sense” is vindicated when it protests against pan-logism, and avers that Relations without related elements – Relations “*in vacuo*” – are nonsense. To insist that the “I” as such, or in its self-negation as “Felt-ness,” is a mere determination of Thought, is an inversion of the conditions of the synthesis⁸⁹⁵

As we have seen, ‘Thought’, according to Bax, was ‘the secondary or derivative principle in Reality’; it presupposed Feeling for its existence, without which there could be no ‘Particularity’, no ‘Contingency’, nor ‘Impulse (Will)’.⁸⁹⁶ Simply stated, ‘Every real’, in Bax’s epistemology, contained ‘a non-rational as well as a rational element.’⁸⁹⁷

In his emphasis on the actuality of the non-rational, it is not difficult to see that Bax was influenced by Schopenhauer, and he declared his debt to the author of *The World as Will and Representation* accordingly several times over in the text.⁸⁹⁸ Far more important, however, than the means by which ‘the element of Reason’ had been ‘dethroned from the absolute position it was wont to occupy’ in the history of philosophy as Bax read it, and in his own reassessment of it in turn, was the ontological upshot of a

⁸⁹³ Ibid., p. 38.

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 38, 39.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 41-42.

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 44, 40.

⁸⁹⁷ Bax, ‘The Practical Significance of Philosophy’, p. 182.

⁸⁹⁸ It is worth noting here too that Comte, although not acknowledged, had also made a case for the primacy of Feeling over Reason. ‘It is quite certain’, Comte argued, ‘that Feeling and Activity have much more to do with any practical step that we take than pure Reason.’ *General View of Positivism*, p. 23.

metaphysic that privileged Feeling instead.⁸⁹⁹ He formulated his position, in relation to Hegel, who wrought Reason-centric philosophy into ‘its most uncompromising and most developed shape’, as follows: ‘One might, *pace* Hegel, define the final term of the dialectical process as, not “Thought thinking itself,” but rather “Feeling feeling itself as determined by Thought.”’⁹⁰⁰ ‘On the theory of Panlogism,’ Bax wrote, ‘the highest form of the Individual Consciousness is Reason... But the fact remains, nevertheless, that the basis of Rationality in human action is always Feeling.’⁹⁰¹

Already, the implications should be clear enough for the ethical viewpoint propounded by Bax’s Idealist contemporaries, a viewpoint, that is, that put the principle of rationality on a pedestal. But Bax added a further blow to the theory in arguing that, ‘happiness, or pleasure’ was the ‘end, the *telos*’ that Feeling sought.⁹⁰² As before, he rejected the idea that ‘the pursuit of pleasure is only an escape into the tyranny and monotony of passion and caprice’.⁹⁰³ Contrary to the arguments posited against Hedonism by Jones and other Idealists, Bax re-positing in *The Problem of Reality* the species of utilitarian ethics that he broached briefly in ‘The New Ethic’ and set out for the first time over ten years earlier in ‘The Ideal of the Future’.

In contrast to Jones’ position, the fact that Feeling ‘could not attain any fixity’ was of no concern to Bax.⁹⁰⁴ On the contrary, the pursuit of ‘happiness or pleasure as abstract category’, Bax argued, could lead only to

⁸⁹⁹ Bax, *Problem of Reality*, p. 99.

⁹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 93.

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 91, 90.

⁹⁰³ Jones, ‘The Social Organism’, p. 18.

⁹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

‘ennui’.⁹⁰⁵ It was, rather, only as element of a constantly changing ‘concrete’ that happiness had any meaning.⁹⁰⁶ Like all other phenomena, it obeyed a dialectical logic. Certainly, Reason played its part in the process. But ‘The first term no less than the last is always Feeling. The difference between them is that, in the first case, the Feeling is indeterminate, in the last it is determinate.’⁹⁰⁷ It was precisely this, the mediating force of Reason, which enabled pleasure to ascend a scale of sophistication, to progressively exchange, in short, the lower for the higher. The ‘inevitable Dialectic of pleasure’ implied a ‘qualitative evolution’.⁹⁰⁸

Granted, ‘the tendency’ hitherto ‘of social evolution’, Bax conceded, ‘seems to be the tendency of misery to become less acute and more massive, less concentrated and more widely distributed.’⁹⁰⁹ That tendency did not, however, afford ‘any criterion’ as with regards to ‘future progress’.⁹¹⁰ There was good reason to believe, rather, that the individual, previously the locus of all ethical theories, had run its course as a depository of pleasure and meaning. ‘In the pursuit of extra-personal ends’, Bax wrote, ‘there is an indication... that the Self-consciousness associated with an animal body is not the final form of Self-Consciousness.’⁹¹¹ Thus, he continued, taking up the line of speculative argument again that he advanced in 1881:

May not the true significance of Ethics, of Duty, of the “Ought” of Conscience, the conviction that the *telos* of the individual lies outside of himself as such, consist in the fact that he is already tending towards absorption in a Consciousness which is his own indeed but yet not his own, that this limited Self-Consciousness of the animal body with the narrow range of its memory-synthesis is simply subservient and contributory to a completer, more determined Self-Consciousness of the Social Body as yet inchoate in

⁹⁰⁵ Bax, *The Problem of Reality*, p. 97.

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 93.

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 141.

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 146.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 147.

⁹¹¹ Ibid., p. 97.

Time? If this be so, the craving of the mystic for union with the divine Consciousness in some transcendent sphere would be but the distorted expression of a truth perfectly consistent with the recognised lines of a scientific materialism.⁹¹²

At this point, two conclusions suggest themselves. Firstly, this conception of ethics, at once both teleological but not necessitarian, was incompatible with the morality of self-realisation. In formulating the idea of a constantly evolving dialectic of pleasure with the subordination or sacrifice of self to society as its end, Bax challenged the notion that Hedonism could ‘afford no universal law’, ‘no imperative’, and ‘no ideal’.⁹¹³ Further, the relationship that Bax established between Feeling and Reason was also important for the role prescribed for the individual in the performance of moral action. In identifying ‘a Law-element and a Chance-element’ in every phenomenon, he downgraded it.⁹¹⁴ ‘The moral “ought” only applies to the particular or a-logical element in the action,’ Bax argued, ‘and it is the preponderance of this particular a-logical element over the necessitated and logical element in any personality that makes us respect a man as having “strength of will”’; for the rest, ‘character is the product of the circumstances of the individual and of those of his ancestors’, and ‘the individual may be said to be not “obnoxious” to praise or blame, since his action is determined.’⁹¹⁵

In this instance, Bax sought to stress the ‘Law-element’ over the ‘Chance-element’ to counterbalance what he felt was the unrealistic compass ascribed to the agency of the individual by Idealists like Jones and Green. However, elsewhere in the book, Bax sought to do exactly the opposite, no less firmly stressing the ‘Chance-element’ at the expense of the

⁹¹² Ibid., pp. 56-57.

⁹¹³ Jones, ‘The Social Organism’, p. 19.

⁹¹⁴ Bax, *Problem of Reality*, p. 113.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 116, 113, 114.

‘Law’. It takes no great effort of imagination to recognise that this put Bax on full collision course with Engels, who in *Ludwig Feuerbach* refused to acknowledge the role of chance in history.⁹¹⁶ The second conclusion, moreover, trenches on similar ground. In *Ludwig Feuerbach*, Engels claimed that ‘happiness thrives for the most part on material means’.⁹¹⁷ For Bax, however, as we have seen, it was realised in something akin to religious feeling. Furthermore, there was no contradiction, he insisted, between that impulse, distorted, for sure, at present, and a properly ‘scientific materialism’. That is to say, he made no effort to avert collision here with the patron of European Social Democracy, choosing instead a course of muted engagement.

On the question of religion, Bax actually soft-pedalled in *The Problem of Reality*. It was an expedient move. For, in making it, Bax shielded himself from criticism at the point at which he was most vulnerable, the point, that is, where he could expect to elicit the least sympathy from his Social Democratic colleagues – most of whom were ill-disposed to anything outside the range of straightforward empirical enquiry. He elected therefore, instead, to pursue Engels on other terrain staked out in *Ludwig Feuerbach*, taking up the question of determinism most overtly and consistently.

Bax reacted, specifically, to Engels’s assertion that, ‘wherever accident superficially holds sway, it is always governed by inner laws and it is only a matter of discovering these laws.’⁹¹⁸ He posited his response in two parts. Firstly, Bax dedicated an entire chapter to answering Engels’s claims about ‘inner general laws’, the notion of ‘accident’, ‘totality’, and other

⁹¹⁶ Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 46.

⁹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

phenomena as set out in the fourth section of *Ludwig Feuerbach*. Yet here, although Bax followed Engels closely, replying to his central argument point for point, he was still not completely candid about his real target of rebuke. He still used ‘Panlogism’ as cover. Bax’s concluding remarks, however, the second part of his response to Engels, were markedly less cautious. They were also more wide-ranging, or less strictly tailored to meet Engels’s claims as deposited in *Ludwig Feuerbach* directly. Although Bax continued to refer to Engels there along with his most subservient disciples euphemistically as ‘these worthy persons’, he drew out explicitly what he felt were the practical political consequences of adopting their determinist views.

In the aforementioned chapter, Bax invoked at the outset the theory that ‘Chance’ was ‘only the name given to imperfect knowledge’.⁹¹⁹ ‘I maintain,’ he wrote, ‘on the contrary, that no concrete event is reducible in its entirety to Law, but that on analysis it will invariably be found to contain an irresolvable Chance-element, which Thought in vain endeavours to force into the mould of the Category.’⁹²⁰ Chance and Law, on Bax’s view, corresponded to the second and third terms respectively of the primal synthesis of Reality, namely to the dynamic, alogical element of the synthesis and to its static, logical counterpart. On the one hand, ‘every event or fact’, Bax averred, ‘is conditioned in its actual happening by an infinitude of other events or facts, each of which is itself conditioned in the same way, and each of which might not have happened.’⁹²¹ This was the Chance-element, which took for its ‘hunting-grounds’ time and space.⁹²² ‘Law’, on the other hand, ‘is valid,’ he insisted, ‘apart from all particulars of Time,

⁹¹⁹ Bax, *The Problem of Reality*, p. 66.

⁹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁹²² Bax, ‘The Practical Significance of Philosophy’, p. 189.

Space, and the sensible content of Time and Space.’⁹²³ ‘A true “Law”’, he went on, in conscious opposition to Engels, ‘defined’ something, it proclaimed ‘some event as impossible’; its mere *probability* did not make it a Law, only ‘an empirical generalisation’.⁹²⁴

Having expelled accident and referred instead to ‘inner general laws’ that governed ‘the course of history’ – apparent already or merely awaiting ‘discovery’ – Engels, Bax implied in his rejoinder-chapter, established, unknowingly, ‘an absolute *prius* in the order of time, a first event or complex of events uncaused or having the will of a Supreme Being for its cause, whence all subsequent events flow.’⁹²⁵ It was, ‘put plainly,’ he wrote, ‘the notion of a machine being set going.’⁹²⁶ Bax poured scorn on the idea that ‘there is such a thing as the totality of events, and that every event as such is reducible to a final cause, a principle only hidden from us by our ignorance’; it ignored ‘the infinite vista of conditioning particulars’ that characterised the alogical side of Reality.⁹²⁷ To be sure, ‘the causal element, the Category, which proclaims that progress must necessarily be along certain lines and that the process itself cannot be determined by individuals,’ did obtain in history.⁹²⁸ Yet, it meant ‘merely that along such and such lines progress must move. Such and such, in general terms, must be the outcome of past and present conditions’.⁹²⁹ What it did not account for was ‘the when and where and the filling in of the picture’.⁹³⁰ ‘Historical progress’, Bax reiterated, could not be reduced simply to its logical side. It

⁹²³ Bax, *The Problem of Reality*, p. 79.

⁹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 79.

⁹²⁵ Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 46. Bax, *The Problem of Reality*, p. 81.

⁹²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁰ *Ibid.*

was, rather, ‘like every other Reality... a synthesis of logical and a-logical, of universal and particular, of Law and Chance.’⁹³¹

In the concluding chapter of *The Problem of Reality*, Bax, at last, suggested openly that what had been said ‘as to the co-relativity of Chance and Law’ afforded ‘a key to the problem that puzzles so many worthy persons as to the compatibility of working for definite social or political ends with the belief that those ends are causally determined by economic and social conditions, independent of the action of any individual’.⁹³² He had, he wrote, found the solution to the ‘dilemma upon the horns of which so many persons are impaled, and which leads them to think that if there be a law discernible in History, if human development follow a determinate course, irrespective of individuals, therefore we should hold our hands and repeat “kismet.”’⁹³³ Cleaving still to a Jacobin understanding of political transition, Bax was concerned, above all, to fell the authority of the theory of economic collapse promoted by Engels. Taking refuge once more in straw-men, he wrote:

To our thinking, nothing can be more immoral, in the true sense of the word, as leading to apathy, indifference and imbecile contentment, than the doctrine of the “natural theologian,” who sees in the Time-process of the real world a puppet-show, determined by the precious divine wisdom of a *deus ex machina*, and who thus leaves the actors therein without any *raison d’être* for action, other than that supplied by the dictates of pure self-interest. If “divine” wisdom were going to take the matter in hand at all, it could not surely require or expect the luckless individual to worry himself in clumsy endeavours to assist.⁹³⁴

In contrast to Engels’s disregard for ‘the motives of particular individuals’, Bax insisted that the individual did, in reality, ‘very easily accelerate or

⁹³¹ Ibid.

⁹³² Ibid., pp. 157-158.

⁹³³ Ibid., pp. 161-162.

⁹³⁴ Ibid., p. 159.

retard indefinitely the course of progress... in spite of the fact that progress is in the last resort logically determined in its main outlines.’⁹³⁵

Unlike Engels, Bax had no desire to dispel ‘great men’ from historical explanation.⁹³⁶ On the contrary, as we shall see in Chapter 11, Bax reserved a special place for ‘the convinced Socialist’ in the transition from class society to Socialism.⁹³⁷ At any rate, if any further evidence was needed to corroborate the analysis outlined above, Bax provided it in the account he gave of Engels’s theoretical accomplishments in his autobiography. ‘It is to the everlasting credit of Marx and Engels to have pointed out the importance of the material or economic basis of society in moulding and influencing that society’s life and destinies’, he wrote.⁹³⁸

But what the Marxian school fails to recognize is that this one factor, important and even fundamental though it be, is not by itself necessarily the sole determining cause in social evolution. Moral, intellectual, and other non-material factors also play their part, and it may be quite as important a part, in determining the current of human affairs. In one age and under one set of circumstances, the economic factor may play the leading role; in another age and under another set of circumstances, a religious, moral, or political belief or conviction may occupy the leading place and economic conditions a comparatively secondary one. In one or two articles written quite at the end of his life and published after his death, Engels himself would seem to have to some extent recognized the inadequacy of what is regarded as the orthodox Marxist position. But Engels, as I knew him, held to the theory in all its one-sidedness.⁹³⁹

⁹³⁵ Bax, ‘The Practical Significance of Philosophy’, p. 194.

⁹³⁶ Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 48.

⁹³⁷ Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘The Will of the Majority’, in *Ethics of Socialism*, p. 127.

⁹³⁸ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, p. 46.

⁹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47. It is unclear which articles Bax had in mind in the passage cited. But it is probable that he meant Engels’s letter to J. Bloch, sent in 1890, and published after Engels’s death in October 1895. In that letter Engels refutes the charge that he and Marx believed that ‘the economic element is the *only* determining factor’ in history. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 49. *Engels: 1890-1892* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 2001), p. 34.

Liberalism Versus Socialism

In 1886, the career and reputation of the advanced Radical politician, Charles Dilke, was shattered by his involvement in the notorious Crawford divorce case. In the fallout he was implicated as guilty of committing perjury. After several years spent fighting the charge, Dilke was cleared. He therefore attempted to resume his once promising political career again at the decade's close. Thus, in the year 1890, the former Liberal cabinet minister, and potential successor to Gladstone as leader of the Liberal party, took up from more or less where he left off, issuing from July to November five articles in *The New Review* entitled, 'A Radical Programme'.⁹⁴⁰

The 'Condition of the People', Dilke wrote in the first instalment, 'is the general description of the topics to which the electorate seem inclined to turn with some impatience.'⁹⁴¹ In the same article, Dilke remarked upon the mutually-reinforcing intellectual and political shift which, as we saw in Chapter 2, had first been set on course during the 1870s and 1880s. Dilke argued that:

There has been a great movement in these matters in our day. The opinions of advanced Radicals of twenty years ago in matters affecting property have, by the change of the times and the march of thought, come to be very much those now held by Lord Bramwell's League for the Defence, as Lord Bramwell says, of Liberty and Property, and as others think, of Property alone.⁹⁴²

⁹⁴⁰ See Roy Jenkins, *Sir Charles Dilke. A Victorian Tragedy* (London, Collins, 1958).

⁹⁴¹ Dilke, 'A Radical Programme. Part I', p. 2.

⁹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

Gesturing openly at Bradlaugh, an opponent of State intervention, and the closest figure that Fawcett had to an heir, Dilke thus concluded: 'Those who have stood still appear to have grown Conservative.'⁹⁴³

Exaggeration apart, Dilke hit the nail on the head when he wrote in the second instalment that, 'We can all remember the time in our youth when the doctrine of *laissez faire* seemed to comprise the whole of orthodox political economy; but now it reads like ancient history, and sounds as a dead doctrine in our ears.'⁹⁴⁴ Intellectually, that transformation could scarcely be better illustrated than by Alfred Marshall's assumption of the chair of political economy at Cambridge left vacant following Fawcett's death in 1884. Fortified by Mill's late utterances, Marshall, unlike Fawcett, was receptive to Socialist ideas. He recorded his approval of Millian Socialism in his extraordinarily successful book, *Principles of Economics*, also published in 1890.⁹⁴⁵ At the same time, politically, however much Gladstone and other 'old-time Liberals' complained and sought to reverse the rising tide, if 'the Liberal Party of 1880' had not exactly 'disappeared by 1890', it too had undergone serious reconstruction.⁹⁴⁶

⁹⁴³ Ibid. To be sure, Bradlaugh 'repudiated the support of the LPDL'. But the proximity, superficially at least, of his position to theirs is undeniable. Bristow, 'The Liberty and Property Defence League and Individualism', p. 775. For another parallel attack on the LPDL, and an effort to redefine Individualism, rendering it compatible with Socialism, see Grant Allen, 'Individualism and Socialism', *The Contemporary Review*, 55 (May. 1889), pp. 730-741. It is also worth noting here Engels's remarks to Bebel in July 1892. 'The view that the Tories today are more favourable to the workers than are the Liberals', he wrote, 'is the reverse of the truth. On the contrary, all the Manchesterian prejudices of the Liberals of 1850 are today articles of faith only to the Tories'. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 49, p. 459.

⁹⁴⁴ Charles Dilke, 'A Radical Programme. Part II', *The New Review*, 3/15 (Aug. 1890), p. 157.

⁹⁴⁵ For Marshall see Winch, *Wealth and Life*, Ch. 9; and John E. Elliot, 'Alfred Marshall On Socialism', *Review of Social Economy*, 48/4 (1990), 450-476. See, also, Hyndman's enthusiastic review of Marshall's *Principles: 'Socialism and Economics. A Review'*, *The New Review*, 3/17 (1890), pp. 344-353.

⁹⁴⁶ Lynd, *England in the Eighteen Eighties*, p. 226. See, for example, Edward Dicey, 'The Plea of a Malcontent Liberal', *The Fortnightly Review*, 38/226 (Oct. 1885), pp. 463-477. See, also, for a condensed history G. R. Searle, *The Liberal Party*.

Of course, as Fawcett foresaw, Dilke was partly responsible for that transformation. That much was also clear to Hyndman. Five years earlier, Hyndman had welcomed the ‘socialistic’ proposals embodied in *The Radical Programme*.⁹⁴⁷ By 1890, however, Dilke’s Radicalism was not just ‘socialistic’. It was, rather, almost entirely of a piece with the Socialism of the Fabian Society.

Following the events of ‘Bloody Sunday’, the demonstration against unemployment at home and coercion in Ireland that ended in violence in November 1887, the Fabian Society had successfully infiltrated the Liberal Party. It ‘permeated’ sections of it with its moderate, practical ideas.⁹⁴⁸ The consequence was not only the adoption of the Newcastle Programme at the annual conference of the National Liberal Federation in 1891. Radicals, like Dilke, also increasingly ceased to think of Radicalism and Socialism as antithetical.⁹⁴⁹ ‘It is possible to believe’, Dilke argued, echoing Webb’s contribution to *Fabian Essays* published the previous year, ‘that we are moving steadily towards a more socialistic state of society without on that account holding Socialist opinions.’⁹⁵⁰ Twelve years earlier this was a grave

Triumph and Disintegration, 1886-1929 (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), Ch. 3.

⁹⁴⁷ H. M. Hyndman, ‘The Radicals and Socialism’, *Nineteenth Century*, 18/105 (Nov. 1885), pp. 833-839. *The Radical Programme* (London, Chapman and Hall, 1885), p. 13.

⁹⁴⁸ Bevir, *Making of British Socialism*, p. 205. For an account of ‘Bloody Sunday’ see Thompson, *William Morris*, pp. 482-503.

⁹⁴⁹ See Pease, *History of the Fabian Society*, pp. 111-112. McBriar strikes a note of caution, however, in accepting Pease’s account. Though ‘it can be readily admitted that the Fabians did much to help forward that Radical aspect of Liberalism of which the Newcastle programme was the much-acclaimed outcome’, he argued, it was not ‘Fabian in origin and inspiration.’ *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, p. 238.

⁹⁵⁰ Dilke, ‘A Radical Programme. Part II’, p. 159. The ‘Socialist philosophy of today’, Webb posited, ‘is but the conscious and explicit assertion of principles of social organization which have been already in great part unconsciously adopted.’ Enumerating his own Spencerian list of State interventionist action, ‘All this’, Webb went on, ‘has been done by ‘practical men’, ignorant, that is to say, of any scientific sociology believing Socialism to be the most foolish of dreams, and absolutely ignoring, as they thought, all grandiloquent claims for social reconstruction.’ ‘Historic’, pp. 62, 81.

prospect for his Radical colleague, Fawcett. For Dilke, however, the dawning era of ‘municipal Socialism’ that he anticipated in *The New Review* was by no means disagreeable.

It goes without saying that, in this, Dilke was not unique. As Bax observed in an article published during the same month as Dilke’s series came to an end: ‘the general opinion seems to be that Liberalism, if its principles are thoroughly carried out, is not in any necessary conflict with Socialism.’⁹⁵¹ By the late-1880s the New Liberalism – typically associated with L. T. Hobhouse and J. A. Hobson – had found its feet. Certainly, there was no shortage of pronouncements about the compatibility of Liberalism and Socialism from adherents of the former ideology.⁹⁵² And the Fabian Society, with its innumerable Tracts and overt openness to ‘middle-class and professional men’, proved particularly attractive to Radicals like Hobhouse moving in an ever-more collectivist direction.⁹⁵³

Before long, the question of Imperialism and the Fabian veneration of efficiency put an end to the honeymoon enjoyed by New Liberal and Fabian thinkers. But the Fabians had proven their mettle as practical social reformers through their involvement on the newly-established London

⁹⁵¹ Bax, ‘Liberalism *versus* Socialism’, in *Outlooks*, p. 67. The lecture was first printed in *Time* in November 1890.

⁹⁵² See Michael Freeden, *The New Liberalism. An Ideology of Social Reform* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 29. As Freeden observed, ‘Sir William Harcourt’s endlessly re-echoed phrase ‘we are all socialists now’ epitomised the new preoccupation of liberals at the end of the 1880s.’ *Ibid.*, p. 25. In what was perhaps a more earnest register, “‘We must assimilate Socialism’, ran an article in *The Speaker*; ‘if ‘Liberal’ is not to become a mere shibboleth, a term as meaningless as ‘Democrat’ or ‘Republican’ in American party politics, we must take from Socialism what is good and reject what is bad or doubtful.” We quote no one; we express, nevertheless, the thoughts of many Liberals, unable to escape the influence of the atmosphere we all breathe, alive to the presence of new duties, perplexed as to their performance.’ ‘The Socialism of Non-Socialists’, *The Speaker: The Liberal Review* (May 10, 1890), pp. 501-502.

⁹⁵³ Shaw, ‘The Fabian Society’, p. 27. Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology*, pp. 61-78.

County Council, created in 1889.⁹⁵⁴ Thus, it was possible for Dilke to assert in 1890 that,

The main difference between German and British Socialism is that, while German Socialism is professorial, or in other words a Socialism of theory British Socialism, so far as it has hitherto been at all successful in the mother country... is empirical, and deals, without any theory, with the facts of life as they present themselves. The English people know no rule but rule of thumb.⁹⁵⁵

Needless to say, Bax had other, very different, ideas. This chapter deals with Bax's relationship to these new phenomena: the New Liberalism and Fabian Socialism.

Many of the Radicals who began to bridge the gap between Liberalism and Socialism in the 1880s were members of the National Liberal Club. Established with Gladstone's assistance in 1882 to provide facilities for Liberals and Liberal sympathisers, Bax also joined the Club in 1889.⁹⁵⁶ In 1887, the SL was captured by its anti-parliamentary, Anarchist-Communist faction. Bax therefore withdrew from the leading edge of the political fray. He chose to insert himself instead among the more comfortable and intellectually stimulating environs of 1 Whitehall Place and Middle Temple.⁹⁵⁷

Among the academics, barristers, journalists, and politicians with whom Bax fraternized at the National Liberal Club, he renewed contact with

⁹⁵⁴ See P. F. Clarke, 'The Progressive Movement in England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 24 (1974), pp. 165-167; and for a much fuller account see McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, Ch. 8. It is certainly true that, while the SDF was represented on the first LCC by John Burns, the Fabian Society had no representatives until the second election in 1892. However, what is equally true is that their influence preceded their presence, taking off in earnest with the publication of Sidney Webb's *The London Programme* in 1891. *Ibid.*, pp. 196-198.

⁹⁵⁵ Dilke, 'A Radical Programme. Part II', pp. 158-159.

⁹⁵⁶ Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions*, pp. 173-180. See Eduard Bernstein's barbed remarks. 'Amongst the Philistines: A Rejoinder to Belfort Bax', in Tudor and Tudor (eds), *Marxism and Social Democracy*, p. 66.

⁹⁵⁷ Thompson, *William Morris*, pp. 446-511.

his Fabian counterparts and former co-participants in the Hampstead Historic Society, Sidney Webb and William Clarke.⁹⁵⁸ Bax spoke respectfully of Webb's 'superhuman industry...in public affairs'.⁹⁵⁹ But he was less impressed by Clarke, who later became a founding member of the Rainbow Circle.⁹⁶⁰ Unlike the so-called 'Engels-Marx family grouping', who formed the Bloomsbury Socialist Society in response to their loss of control in the League, Bax rejoined the SDF in 1888. However, he and Engels formed the same opinion of Fabian policy. Besides the unhappy conflation of form and content that he associated with Fabian Socialism, Bax argued that, to become the 'last vertebra in the tail of the Liberal Party', was no ambition at all.⁹⁶¹

Bax did not, in short, modify the revolutionary temper of his own brand of Socialism on account of his new surroundings. On the contrary, asked to deliver a lecture on the subject of Liberalism and Socialism at the National Liberal Club in 1890 he remained as uncompromising as ever in his political beliefs. In the published transcript of that lecture, suggestively entitled 'Liberalism *versus* Socialism', Bax therefore issued a rejoinder to the conclusions drawn by Webb 'from the fact of the sporadic existence of public property in the present day as to the Socialistic tendencies of the

⁹⁵⁸ For Webb see Royden Harrison, *The Life and Times of Beatrice and Sidney Webb, 1858-1905. The Formative Years* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 2000); and for Clarke see Peter Weiler, 'William Clarke: The Making and Unmaking of a Fabian Socialist', *Journal of British Studies*, 14/1 (1974), pp. 77-108.

⁹⁵⁹ Ernest Belfort Bax, 'Fabianism', *Justice* (Dec. 19, 1891), p. 2

⁹⁶⁰ The Rainbow Circle was founded on National Liberal Club premises in 1893. Michael Freeden (ed.), *Minutes of the Rainbow Circle, 1894-1924* (London, Royal Historical Society, 1989), p. 1.

⁹⁶¹ Ernest Belfort Bax, 'Socialism: What it is and What it is Not', in *Essays in Socialism. New and Old* (London, E. Grant Richards, 1907), p. 8. Bax, 'Fabianism', p. 2. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works. Vol. 49. Engels: 1890-1892* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 2001), p. 494.

modern bourgeois world.⁹⁶² His real polemical sights, however, were set elsewhere.

Instead of attempting to tap the Liberal tradition in an effort to pull its more susceptible advocates towards the Socialism of the SDF, Bax submitted to the audience a statement that amounted essentially to an ultimatum:

The Liberal party has always claimed to be the party of progress, to be the exponent of the progressive lines of social and political development at a given epoch, and, as such, to be opposed to the party of reaction. This may be termed the negative side of Liberal theory, and so long as it maintains this attitude as the party in the vanguard of progress, it must necessarily become identical with Socialism – i.e., from the standpoint of Socialists. But here comes the crux. If Liberalism becomes identified with Socialism, it surrenders bodily all that has hitherto formed the positive side of its theory, and, indeed, what has hitherto given it the reason of its being.⁹⁶³

Bax, in other words, invited the increasing number of New Liberals who had taken their cue from Green in pursuing the ‘same old cause of social good against class interests’ in alternative, seemingly conflictual ways, to become Socialists, rather than demand, more cannily, that the Liberals of the ‘Old’, static variety either alter their views to bring them into accordance with an altered environment or give up the title entirely.⁹⁶⁴ In presenting the relationship between Liberalism and Socialism in this way, as a zero-sum game, there was only a hair’s breadth between Bax’s analysis and Herbert Spencer’s, an equally uncompromising political actor, widely recognised by other contemporary Liberals as, likewise, unreasonably extreme.⁹⁶⁵

⁹⁶² Bax, ‘Liberalism *versus* Socialism’, p. 84.

⁹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁹⁶⁴ Green, ‘Lecture on Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract’, p. 367.

⁹⁶⁵ See Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology*, pp. 19–20; and Henry Sidgwick, ‘Economic Socialism’, *The Contemporary Review*, 50 (Nov. 1886), pp. 620–631.

In 1884, Spencer published four articles in the February, April, May, June, and July editions of *The Contemporary Review*. They were collected and published together later that year as *The Man versus the State*. Soon after, Spencer's text began its career as a manifesto for political individualists like those belonging to the LPDL, anxious to forestall any further advance of what Spencer termed there 'The Coming Slavery'. Prompted by Percy Bunting, the editor of the *Contemporary*, to respond to Lord Salisbury's intervention in the *National Review* on the question of workers' housing, in those articles, Spencer resumed the onslaught against Liberal advocacy of State intervention begun by Fawcett in 1878.⁹⁶⁶

Both Spencer and Bax treated Liberalism historically. Each assigned it a core value. In the absence of that core value it was no longer the same phenomenon, and should, therefore, be properly called by a more accurate name.

For Spencer, 'the liberty which a citizen' enjoyed could be measured 'by the relative paucity of the restraints' that 'the governmental machinery he lives under... imposes on him'.⁹⁶⁷ In the past, 'Liberalism habitually stood', he explained, 'for individual freedom *versus* State-coercion'.⁹⁶⁸ Yet, Liberals of the present, he argued, had 'lost sight' of that truth.⁹⁶⁹ Spencer thus concluded that, in consequence of the fact that a 'popular good has come to be sought by Liberals, not as an end to be indirectly gained by relaxations of restraints, but as the end to be directly gained', most of those

⁹⁶⁶ John Offer, 'Introduction', in Spencer, *Political Writings*, p. xxii. Spencer did not, though, offer the routine remarks about Owen, St. Simon, and Fourier. See Charles Bradlaugh's parallel articles, for example, 'Socialism', *Our Corner* (Mar. Apr. May, 1884), pp. 137-142, 200-205, 267-274. There was also a response from J. L. Joynes, 'Socialism', *Our Corner* (Jun. 1884), pp. 330-336.

⁹⁶⁷ Spencer, *The Man versus the State*, p. 77.

⁹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 73.

who now described themselves as Liberals were really no more than ‘Tories of a new type.’⁹⁷⁰

Give and take a, not unsubstantive, detail here and there, by substituting Socialism for Toryism, Bax was more or less of the same mind. Bax also believed that Liberalism ‘has up till now placed the freedom of the individual as the professed aim of all its measures’, and insofar as it ceased to continue to do so in the way that it had done historically – i.e. by negative means, as opposed to the positive action proposed by Green and others – it ceased, also, to be Liberal.⁹⁷¹

Crucially, Bax added, however, that what was *actually* ‘cared for was not so much the liberty of the individual as the liberty of private property.’⁹⁷² Tracing a history of Liberalism ‘in a wider sense than that of mere current party politics’ not dissimilar from Spencer’s parallel effort, he gave his own genealogy of the phenomenon a twist derived from the work of Engels and Marx. Bax argued that ‘the Liberal party represented the struggle of the middle-classes with expiring feudalism and absolute monarchy.’⁹⁷³ Bax conceded that, ‘while Liberalism... was at first true to its principle... it was really fighting the battle of the individual.’⁹⁷⁴ Nonetheless, ‘that security and freedom in the tenure of private property’ was ‘no longer synonymous with individual liberty, but often with its opposite’, was also obvious, he averred.⁹⁷⁵

Bax argued that,

Individual liberty *now* demands the curtailment and the eventual extinction of the liberty of private property, and that Liberalism, in

⁹⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 69, 63.

⁹⁷¹ Bax, ‘Liberalism *versus* Socialism’, p. 67.

⁹⁷² Ibid., p. 68.

⁹⁷³ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 69.

⁹⁷⁵ Ibid.

so far as it aims at maintaining the liberty of private property, is reactionary and false to the principle which it has always implicitly or explicitly maintained, of the right of each and every individual to full and free development.⁹⁷⁶

Echoing the powerful humanist strain in the early Marx, 'The individual now desired by the Socialist', he concluded, 'is the liberty of the individual as man, and no longer his liberty as mere property holder'.⁹⁷⁷

Bax and Spencer agreed in their judgement of what Liberalism was. But Bax attacked Spencer for his defence of 'the most flabby pretences of the *Laissez-faire* economy' in the *Handbook to the History of Philosophy*.⁹⁷⁸ In contrast to his favourable estimation of Spencer's other work, *The Principles of Sociology* already showed, Bax argued, a serious 'falling off'.⁹⁷⁹ It resulted 'in an inadequacy of treatment verging at times on the puerile'.⁹⁸⁰ Thus, Spencer's dogmatism in political economy, namely, his refusal to countenance *any* interference with freedom of contract, was only confirmed by his intervention in the *Contemporary*.

In the second article Spencer singled out the DF as one of 'the many concurrent causes which threaten continually to accelerate the transformation now going on'.⁹⁸¹ Hyndman issued a reply to Spencer's assault at the time.⁹⁸² All the same, Bax laid down his own objections to

⁹⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 69-70.

⁹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 70. In *On the Jewish Question*, for example, Marx argued against confusing 'political emancipation' with 'the completed, contradiction-free form of human emancipation'. It was quite possible for the state to be 'a *free state*', he suggested, 'without man being a free man.' Commenting on the French Constitution of 1793, 'The practical application of the human right of freedom', he wrote, 'is the right of *private property*.' Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', in *Early Political Writings*, trans. Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 34, 45.

⁹⁷⁸ Bax, *Handbook*, p. 389.

⁹⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁸¹ Spencer, *The Man versus the State*, p. 94.

⁹⁸² Hyndman, *Socialism and Slavery*.

Spencer's argument in the lecture he delivered in 1890.⁹⁸³ He objected, above all, to two points: to Spencer's unflinching espousal, on the one hand, of negative liberty; and, on the other, to Spencer's equation of all Socialism with slavery.⁹⁸⁴

Passing happily over both the 'shady side' of the Socialist ideal that Spencer illumined (as he had done before with Mill's *Chapters*), and the moderate, or State-friendly, individualism championed by many mainstream Liberals, 'The fact that individual liberty thus formulated [i.e. negatively] could be anything other than the only true individual liberty, never occurred', Bax argued, 'to the liberal individualist.'⁹⁸⁵ While the case for negative liberty held good, still 'Up till the end of last century', 'the revolution in the production and distribution of wealth' attendant upon the introduction of machinery had, he suggested, by the beginning of the nineteenth century 'put an entirely new face on things.'⁹⁸⁶ Henceforth, liberty in its negative guise became 'a purely abstract and formal' kind of individualism.⁹⁸⁷ It 'sacrificed the real freedom of the individual' to a merely nominal species, a fact plainly recognised by 'the Socialist, in contradistinction to the Liberal'.⁹⁸⁸

Unlike Spencer, Bax did not believe in the necessity of 'suffering' and the permanence of the ostensible 'misconduct' from whence it flowed.⁹⁸⁹ As opposed to a vision of society that rewarded only 'energetic'

⁹⁸³ Paul Lafargue, 'A Few Words with Mr Herbert Spencer', *To-day*, 1/6 (Jun. 1884), pp. 416-427. On the 'canonical status' of Spencer's book, John Offer wrote: 'To those self-styled "individualists" anxious to roll back the state Spencer now became a mentor, with *The Man versus The State* their manifesto.' 'Introduction', in Spencer, *Political Writings*, p. xxvi.

⁹⁸⁴ Spencer, *The Man versus the State*, p. 95.

⁹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101. Bax, 'Liberalism versus Socialism', p. 74.

⁹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 74, 75.

⁹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁹ Spencer, *The Man versus the State*, p. 81. 'There is a notion, always more or less prevalent and just now vociferously expressed,' Spencer wrote, 'that all social

creatures, Bax, dwelling, in Spencer's terms, on only the 'promised pleasures' and 'thinking nothing of the accompanying pains', looked forward, instead, to an era of 'human individualism' under Socialism, in contrast to the 'class individualism' of contemporary Liberalism, which encouraged the worst in human behaviour and kept the truly human, 'social qualities' in check.⁹⁹⁰ Disregarding Spencer's warnings about 'the tyranny of organisation' and 'the defects of existing human nature', Bax concluded that, 'liberty may be inseparable from property, but nowadays it is inseparable from the common holding of property by the community.'⁹⁹¹

Moving on to Spencer's second miscalculation, Bax flagged up 'the nonsense talked about coercion under Socialism'.⁹⁹² Bax asked, in rhetorical fashion, if anyone supposed for an instant that Socialism implied 'any more coercion than what is absolutely necessitated by circumstances?'⁹⁹³ Bax distinguished between 'the coercion of natural forces and of the economic conditions of a free competitive society' on the one hand, 'and that of Socialism' on the other: 'the one, he wrote, 'is a blind, unregulated... capricious power left to assert itself to the full over the unlucky individual; while the other is a consciously exercised and regulated coercion whose aim is... to minimise the former to the utmost. The one means coercion untamed,' he surmised, 'the other coercion tamed.'⁹⁹⁴

suffering is removable, and that it is the duty of somebody or other to remove it. Both these beliefs are false. To separate pain from ill-doing is to fight against the constitution of things, and will be followed by far more pain. Saving men from the natural penalties of dissolute living, eventually necessitates the infliction of artificial penalties in solitary cells, on tread-wheels, and by the lash.' Ibid.

⁹⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 81, 101. Bax, 'Liberalism versus Socialism', p. 81. Bax, 'Man versus Classes', p. 99.

⁹⁹¹ Spencer, *The Man versus the State*, pp. 102, 103. Bax, 'Liberalism versus Socialism', p. 81.

⁹⁹² Ibid., pp. 81-82.

⁹⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

Contrary to Spencer's prognosis of a revival, 'under a different form', of 'that *regime* of status' which Liberalism had once helped society shed, Bax argued that, 'The great thing that now oppresses men is, not the privilege of *status*, but the privilege of wealth.'⁹⁹⁵ And in opposition to Spencer's claim that 'All Socialism involves slavery', Bax shot back that 'the attainment of the maximum of *formal* liberty has produced a maximum of *real* slavery.'⁹⁹⁶ Not for Bax concerns that under collective ownership the 'individual would be a slave to the community as a whole'.⁹⁹⁷ It was 'Free contract under a system of unrestricted individual property holding' that had 'strangled liberty'.⁹⁹⁸ However, Bax did not propose to leave to chance all provision against the potential tyranny of the majority. While no less dismissive of the reality of 'political emancipation' as the young Marx, Bax was far less ready to countenance disposing of the individual rights gained over centuries all at one go.

Unlike the various 'New' Liberals, Spencer refused to believe in the viability of a mixed economy: it was a question of either/or, the phenomenon of 'political momentum' permitting of no in-betweens.⁹⁹⁹ In accordance with the views of Bradlaugh and, slightly later, George, Spencer argued that the road to 'a grinding tyranny like that of Ancient Peru' was paved with the good intentions of those like Green, Toynbee and other current Liberal

⁹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 86.

⁹⁹⁶ Spencer, *The Man versus the State*, p. 95. Bax, 'Liberalism *versus* Socialism', p. 87. It should be added here that Marx did not use the language of slavery in 'On the Jewish Question'. He concentrated his attack, instead, on the 'egoistic spirit of civil society' that political emancipation effectively rubber-stamped. 'Only when the actual individual man absorbs the abstract citizen of the state into himself and has become in his empirical life, in his individual labour, in his individual relationships a *species-being*,' Marx argued, 'only then is human emancipation completed.' 'On the Jewish Question', p. 50.

⁹⁹⁷ Spencer, *The Man versus the State*, p. 103.

⁹⁹⁸ Bax, 'Liberalism *versus* Socialism', p. 87.

⁹⁹⁹ Spencer, *The Man versus the State*, p. 85.

Cabinet Ministers who proposed the kind of apparently liberty-enhancing State interventionist policies that only, in fact, accelerated the advent of ‘officialism’ and the downward spiral towards the condition of slavery he envisaged.¹⁰⁰⁰ By contrast to Dilke, who echoed Hyndman in making the State and the people synonymous once all had the vote, to Spencer it mattered not one jot ‘the nature of the agency which interferes with them’.¹⁰⁰¹ The ‘real issue’ was ‘whether the lives of citizens’ were ‘more interfered with’ than they were before, a rule that held good for a despotic regime, where the degree of slavery might be heavy, as well as for ‘a popularly-chosen body’, where the degree of slavery might be light.¹⁰⁰²

Spencer, then, repudiated, in anticipation, almost all that Dilke said and stood for in 1890. But he and Dilke did, at least, share one conviction in common: the view, namely, that Liberals and Tories had begun to change places. In broaching that idea, Dilke did not intend to be taken literally. Spencer, on the other hand, did have a non-metaphorical meaning in mind when he raised the prospect of that eventuality.¹⁰⁰³

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Will Socialism Benefit the English People? Verbatim Report of a Debate Between H. M. Hyndman and C. Bradlaugh* (London, Freethought Publishing Company, 1884), p. 14. Henry George and H. M. Hyndman, *The Single Tax Versus Social Democracy. Which Will Most Benefit the People?* (London, Justice Printery, 1889), p. 27. Spencer, *The Man versus the State*, p. 104.

¹⁰⁰¹ ‘Formerly the State was looked upon by the masses of the people in the light of an aristocratic or of an autocratic abstraction,’ Dilke argued, ‘whereas now it daily comes to be more and more looked upon by the people as a synonym for themselves... The very phrase “paternal legislation” has become inapplicable to the State Socialism of Great Britain and her Colonies, for a democratic people now look upon the State not so much in the light of a father as in that of a servant of their will’. ‘A Radical Programme. Part II’, p. 159. *Will socialism benefit the English people?*, p. 16. Spencer, *The Man versus the State*, p. 76.

¹⁰⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 77. For Spencer it did not matter if the State was a popularly-chosen body, for ‘each member of the community as an individual would be a slave to the community as a whole.’ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹⁰⁰³ ‘A new species of Tory may arise without disappearance of the original species’, Spencer explained. ‘Nevertheless,’ he continued, ‘it is true that the laws made by Liberals are so greatly increasing the compulsions and restraints exercised over citizens, that among Conservatives who suffer from this aggressiveness there is growing up a tendency to resist it. Proof is furnished by the fact that the “Liberty and Property Defence League,” largely consisting of Conservatives has taken for its motto “Individualism *versus* Socialism.” So that if the present drift of things

Two years before the Liberal Unionist Party was formed in opposition to Gladstone in 1886, and George Goschen (whom Bax described as a mere 'lump' of 'class-feeling') accepted Lord Salisbury's invitation to join his ministry as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Spencer called 'the present drift of things' on that front correctly.¹⁰⁰⁴ The presence of the LPDL, with whom Spencer later collaborated, was only the thin end of the wedge: many of those who broke with Gladstone over the issue of Home Rule were no less concerned than Spencer about 'the laws made by Liberals', 'so greatly increasing the compulsions and restraints exercised over citizens'.¹⁰⁰⁵ Perturbed, further, by another extension of the franchise in 1884, a large number of those who broke ranks with their former colleagues believed, like Webb, that Democracy and Socialism were natural bedfellows; to encourage the one, without installing beforehand the requisite 'prophylactic' devices, was to stimulate and promote the other.¹⁰⁰⁶

Bax, by contrast, was more sceptical. He believed, along with Hyndman, that, as things stood, the workers were 'too ignorant, too apathetic, and too much split up among themselves' to respond positively to

continues, it may by and by really happen that the Tories will be defenders of liberties which the Liberals... trample under foot.' Ibid., p. 79. For Spencer's relationship with the LPDL see Bristow, 'The Liberty and Property Defence League and Individualism', pp. 770-771

¹⁰⁰⁴ Bax, 'Man versus Classes', p. 101. Spencer, *The Man versus the State*, p. 79. See *Address by the Right Hon. G. J. Goschen to the members of the Philosophical Institution at Edinburgh on Laissez-faire and Government Interference* (London, Spottiswoode & Co, 1883).

¹⁰⁰⁵ Spencer, *The Man versus the State*, p. 79. Christopher Harvie, 'Ideology and Home Rule: James Bryce, A. V. Dicey and Ireland, 1880-1887', *The English Historical Review*, 91/359 (1976), pp. 298-314. Harvie, *The Lights of Liberalism*, Ch. 9.

¹⁰⁰⁶ George C. Brodrick, 'Democracy and Socialism', *The Nineteenth Century* (Apr. 1884), p. 642. 'Socialists', Webb wrote, 'are only advocating the conscious adoption of a principle of social organization which the world has already found to be the inevitable outcome of Democracy and the Industrial Revolution.' 'The main stream', he continued, 'which has borne European society towards Socialism during the past 100 years is the irresistible progress of Democracy. De Tocqueville drove and hammered this truth into the reluctant ears of the Old World two generations ago'. 'Historic', pp. 64, 65.

‘the Cause of Socialism’.¹⁰⁰⁷ The emergence of the New Unionism did nothing to alter his opinion on the matter, either. Bax was just as quietly contemptuous of trade unionism, both ‘old’ and ‘new’, as he was of the eight hour agitation, also supported by Dilke in his latest Radical programme. In a telling crossing of political paths, on his way back in to the SDF, Bax passed on the way out Burns, Champion, and Mann. All three held wholly positive views of both phenomena, as opposed to the ‘lofty detachment’ of the body to which they had until then belonged.¹⁰⁰⁸

Contrary to Engels’ belief that ‘the revival of the East End of London’ trumped in significance ‘the actual progress’ that Socialism had ‘made in England generally’, Bax argued that successful revolutions were the work of energetic minorities. According to Bax, there was no reason to believe why Socialism would not be accomplished ‘in opposition to, or at least irrespective of, the inert mass constituting the numerical majority’ again.¹⁰⁰⁹ ‘Mere class-instinct’ by itself could not, in any case, truly realise Socialism as Bax understood it.¹⁰¹⁰ Confounding Dilke’s dichotomy, Bax insisted on establishing a qualitative difference between ‘Statification’ and Socialism of the right, ‘modern scientific’ kind, a difference borne precisely of theoretical speculation, rather than empirical observation or English ‘rule of thumb’.¹⁰¹¹ Unlike Engels, Bax did not detect lupine characteristics in the Socialism of the Fabian Society. But he did not hesitate either to

¹⁰⁰⁷ H. M. Hyndman, ‘The English Workers as they Are’, *The Contemporary Review*, 52 (Jul. 1887), p. 128. Bax, ‘Man versus Classes’, p. 104. Unlike Lenin, he did not invest romantically in the workers movement. See Lars T. Lih, *Lenin* (London, Reaktion, 2011) for a short account.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Thompson, *William Morris*, p. 530. Cowley, *The Victorian Encounter with Marx*, pp. 91-93.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Bax, ‘The Will of the Majority’, p. 128.

¹⁰¹⁰ Bax, ‘Man versus Classes’, p. 104.

¹⁰¹¹ Bax, ‘Socialism: What It Is and What It Is Not’, pp. 8, 7.

point out the serious shortcomings of the Fabian Socialists' vision.¹⁰¹² Thus, even if Liberals were prepared to drop the positive side of their theory, it would still not be enough, he argued in his National Liberal Club lecture, to simply fall in behind Webb, Clarke, and their other Fabian Socialist colleagues.

¹⁰¹² The 'very people', Engels argued, 'who, from the 'impartiality' of their superior standpoint, preach to the workers a Socialism soaring high above their class interests and class struggles, and tending to reconcile in a higher humanity the interests of both the contending classes – these people are either neophytes, who have still to learn a great deal, or they are the worst enemies of the workers – wolves in sheep's clothing.' *Condition of the Working Class*, p. 26.

The Morrow of the Revolution

Fears about Democracy and Socialism did not abate in the wake of the failure of Mill's prophecy made in the opening paragraphs of *Chapters on Socialism* to come to fruition in the immediate aftermath of issuing it in 1869. The anxiety that the one, left unchecked, would ineluctably lead to the other intensified, rather, following the extension of the franchise again in 1884. Despite the fact that the SDF had shown its true strength in its dismal electoral performance in the election of 1885, with Jack Williams and John Fielding picking up a mere 27 and 32 votes each, while John Burns scored only marginally better, taking only 5 percent of the votes in his Nottingham constituency, many commentators still anticipated the spread of Socialism as a direct consequence of 'the electoral power' now placed 'within the reach of the working classes'.¹⁰¹³ Nor were these commentators all Individualists of the extreme variety, ready to find 'the cloven foot of Socialism in every legislative restriction of individual liberty.'¹⁰¹⁴ On the contrary, while extreme Individualists were well-represented among the apprehensive, there were others, like George Brodrick, for example, not so much inclined to theatricality, who were also concerned about the ramifications of the extension of the voting system.

Posed explicitly in opposition to 'the point of view adopted by' the LPDL and 'more or less sanctioned' by Spencer, Brodrick argued in April 1884 that, 'however clear the germs of Socialism may be discerned in many

¹⁰¹³ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 223. For the SDF's electoral performance see Crick, *History of the Social Democratic Federation*, p. 44.

¹⁰¹⁴ George C. Brodrick, 'Democracy and Socialism', *Nineteenth Century*, 15/86 (Apr. 1884), p. 627.

recent statutes passed under a democratic impulse, it would be difficult to specify one which is distinctively Socialistic'.¹⁰¹⁵ They 'cannot properly be called Socialistic,' he wrote, 'inasmuch as they were not dictated by a desire to promote the Socialistic ideal of equality'.¹⁰¹⁶ Unlike Spencer and his epigones, Brodrick, in other words, did not dismiss as irrelevant the intentions embodied in the various measures passed in recent years. The bulk of Gladstone's legislation had been occasioned, he held, 'by a revulsion of the national conscience against the moral results of the *laissez-faire* system, left to operate uncontrolled', and they need not necessarily assume a form ulterior to their strictly ameliorative design.¹⁰¹⁷ Nonetheless, it did not follow that, because most of 'the Acts passed in recent years' were free from the Socialism so often imputed to them, Democracy was 'not Socialistic in its tendencies and aspirations', all the same.¹⁰¹⁸ If Mill's judgement had not yet worked itself out in practice, it remained, he affirmed, 'a salutary warning'.¹⁰¹⁹ Brodrick reiterated that, 'it would be very unsafe to imagine that working men, now admitted on equal terms into the governing class, and commanding a numerical majority of votes, will long abstain from using those votes for the purpose of furthering whatever objects they may have at heart'.¹⁰²⁰ Something, therefore, would have to be done about the present contrast, nowhere 'more appalling', he claimed, 'between the lot of Dives and the lot of Lazarus'.¹⁰²¹

John Rae, whom Marx dismissed at the beginning of the 1880s as one of the 'penmen of British philistinism' and chief misinterpreters of his

¹⁰¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 628-629.

¹⁰¹⁷ Here, Brodrick cited Goschen for whom he later championed the Liberal Unionist cause in Oxford within the academic Liberal community. Philip Waller, 'Brodrick, George Charles (1831-1903)', *ODNB*. 'Democracy and Socialism', p. 628.

¹⁰¹⁸ Ibid., p. 627.

¹⁰¹⁹ Ibid., p. 629.

¹⁰²⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰²¹ Ibid.

work, was of a similar opinion.¹⁰²² In 1891, he argued that, 'When supreme power is vested in a majority of the people, property cannot sit securely till it becomes so general a possession that a majority of the people has a stake in its defence.'¹⁰²³ Like Brodrick, he, too, insisted on a more precise application of the word Socialism. It did not apply, he concurred, to 'any fresh extension of the functions of the State', but rather only to those with 'some false ideal of social or distributive justice' as its conscious end.¹⁰²⁴ However, in contrast to Brodrick, Rae was also guarded about the notion that there was a 'natural solidarity between democracy and socialism'.¹⁰²⁵ In fact, the 'natural tendency of democracy is not to socialism', he claimed.¹⁰²⁶ Inserting a qualification, he distinguished between 'two different forms of democracy': 'the American and the Continental', and only the latter type had 'a tendency only too natural towards' the system that both he and Brodrick condemned.¹⁰²⁷

Taking a somewhat less reductionist stance than Brodrick, Rae isolated two factors that decided 'the question whether political democracy must end in social'.¹⁰²⁸ The first of these was 'historical conditions', the nature of 'the national character' that predisposed a people to behave a certain way.¹⁰²⁹ The second, and 'scarcely less important', factor was 'whether the laws and economic situation of the country have conduced to a dispersion or to a concentration of property.'¹⁰³⁰ Europe was vulnerable on both counts. Its stability, Rae therefore concluded, would 'rest on the

¹⁰²² Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*. Vol. 46, p. 162.

¹⁰²³ John Rae, *Contemporary Socialism* (London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1908), p. 23.

¹⁰²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁰²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁰²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁰²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 22.

¹⁰²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

¹⁰²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁰³⁰ *Ibid.*

number of its comfortable peasantry'.¹⁰³¹ The 'dam of the Revolution', he averred, would be 'the small farm', a fact 'not less true of England'.¹⁰³²

That neither Bax nor Hyndman possessed a sophisticated understanding of the political mores of the groups in British society whom they hoped to lead is clearly evidenced by their consistent failure, with the exception of *England for All*, to properly account for the content of those traditions in their work of propaganda. That much is beyond dispute. But, at the same time, their combined appraisal of the danger posed to the status quo by the increasing electoral power invested in the workers was far more measured than that which Brodrick, Rae, and others advanced. For example, if Brodrick thought that Mill was right to forecast a delayed reaction, allowing time for 'the new electors' to learn first to 'realise', then 'exercise their power', Bax believed that '*apathy*' would continue to provide the keynote for the majority in politics for at least the foreseeable future.¹⁰³³ As opposed to nascent Socialist partisans, Bax saw only 'human cabbage stalks', lacking, for the most part, the will and sense of public duty demanded of change in a Socialist direction.¹⁰³⁴ So 'long as there is inequality of education', he insisted, as well as other economic inequalities, 'and the majority are at a disadvantage in respect of these things, they are necessarily incapable of weighing the issue before them.'¹⁰³⁵ For Bax, then, Socialism posed at present no electoral risk because the majority, in the absence of sufficiently

¹⁰³¹ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁰³² Ibid.

¹⁰³³ Brodrick, 'Democracy and Socialism', p. 629.

¹⁰³⁴ Bax, 'The Will of the Majority', p. 127.

¹⁰³⁵ Ibid., p. 121.

tutored minds, were ‘at the mercy of every passing wind’ in terms of judgement formation.¹⁰³⁶

Bax set these views out in an essay entitled, ‘The Will of the Majority’. The main purpose of the essay was to argue that the will of the majority should on no account enjoy ‘an inviolable claim to respect’ as an axiom. That principle held true, not only for the present, but for a future ‘society of equals’.¹⁰³⁷ It was an essay self-consciously derivative of Mill’s writings, on both the question of liberty and on the forms of good government. In the first instance, much of what Bax wrote about will and education answered to Mill’s utterances on each of those subjects. However, he also endorsed Mill’s ‘one very simple principle’ concerning actions of a ‘self-regarding’ kind as well as Mill’s recommendation that participation in public functions ‘should be as great as the general degree of improvement of the community will allow’.¹⁰³⁸

According to Bax, it was plain that, in consequence of the ‘mechanical’ nature of electoral majorities, they could have ‘no claim on the recognition of the Socialist in the present day’.¹⁰³⁹ Just as Mill refused to grant that ignorance should be ‘entitled to as much political power as knowledge’, Bax argued that the only will of the majority eligible for binding status on Socialists was ‘the will of the majority of the European Socialist party’.¹⁰⁴⁰ Betraying none of Mill’s pronounced caution, however, Bax suggested that the ‘motto of the Socialist’ should simply ‘be the shortest way to the goal, be it through the votes of the majority or otherwise.’¹⁰⁴¹ Mill, to

¹⁰³⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁷ Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁰³⁸ Mill, *Representative Government*, p. 256.

¹⁰³⁹ Bax, ‘The Will of the Majority’, pp. 127, 122.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Mill, *Representative Government*, p. 336. Bax, ‘The Will of the Majority’, p. 122.

¹⁰⁴¹ Ibid., p. 128.

be sure, attributed importance to the weight of unusually wilful groups of individuals. 'One person with a belief,' he wrote, 'is a social power equal to ninety-nine who have only interests.'¹⁰⁴² Yet he was also averse to anything as reckless as the proposition put forward by Bax that the end justified the means. Giving no thought to how the means might 'modify, and thereby corrupt,' the end in question, Bax offered the following thought-experiment as an example:

supposing Social Democracy triumphant in Germany before other western countries were ripe for the change of their own initiative. It might then be a matter of life and death for Socialist Germany to forestall a military and economic isolation in the face of a reactionary European coalition by immediate action, especially against the stronghold of modern commercialism. Should such an invasion of the country take place, it would be the duty of every Socialist to do all in his power to assist the invaders to crush the will of the count-of-heads majority of the people of England, knowing that the real welfare of the latter lay therein, little as they might suspect it.¹⁰⁴³

Although Mill would not on any measure countenance any such 'plunge' into the unknown – indeed, actively opposing 'those who would play' such games on 'the strength of their own private' opinions – he would not have frowned so severely upon the 'conditions' that Bax established before a 'verdict of the majority ought clearly to be binding on all'.¹⁰⁴⁴ The prerequisites for this, according to Bax, were, firstly, 'perfect economic and educational equality', and, second, the maintenance of a 'healthy interest in all questions affecting the commonwealth'.¹⁰⁴⁵ Disregarding the adjective that Bax deployed in the first of those conditions, for Mill, too, the 'first element of good government' was 'the virtue and intelligence of the human beings composing the community'.¹⁰⁴⁶ Both he and Bax also recognised that

¹⁰⁴² Mill, *Representative Government*, p. 214.

¹⁰⁴³ Norberto Bobbio, *Which Socialism? Marxism, Socialism and Democracy* (Worcester, Polity Press, 1976), p. 99. Bax, 'The Will of the Majority', p. 128.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Mill, *Chapters*, p. 290. Bax, 'The Will of the Majority', pp. 123, 124.

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Mill, *Representative Government*, p. 226.

those qualities were not acquired easily. To some extent, at least, then, Bax, no less than Mill, was prepared to grapple with some of the more uncomfortable questions facing any future-system builder. His answers were not always ‘sharply authoritarian’ either.¹⁰⁴⁷ Overlooked until now, side by side with Bax’s authoritarian proposals was a Liberal strain to which he was *unequivocally* indebted to Mill.

In ‘The Will of the Majority’, Bax enunciated ‘one exception’ to majority verdicts arrived at even under circumstances ‘representing the highest practical reason of which human nature is capable up to date’: ‘I refer’, he wrote, ‘to actions which Mill calls self-regarding, or those which in no way directly concern the society or corporate body.’¹⁰⁴⁸ In ‘all really “self-regarding actions,” that is, actions which directly affect the individual performing them alone,’ Bax wrote in article two years earlier, ‘complete freedom is of the very essence of Socialism.’¹⁰⁴⁹

That article was published in *Justice* in March 1891. By then, the SL had been absorbed by the Anarchists in the organisation. Branch by branch, it had continued the process of slow disintegration after Bax’s own breach with the group in 1888. Three years later, however, the Communist Anarchists, with whom Bax and the ‘Engels-Marx family grouping’ had initially quarrelled, had begun, in Thompson’s words, to be

¹⁰⁴⁷ Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, p. 281.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Bax, ‘The Will of the Majority’, p. 124. ‘The object of this Essay’, Mill famously wrote in *On Liberty*, ‘is to assert one very simple principle... That principle is, that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.’ *On Liberty*, in *On Liberty and Other Writings*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘Individual Rights under Socialism’, in *Outlooks*, p. 144.

‘outblustered’.¹⁰⁵⁰ They were now the ‘moderates’ in an organisation increasingly ready to endorse acts of terror, or ‘propaganda of the deed’.¹⁰⁵¹ Morris had thus been ejected from the editorship of the League newspaper *Commonweal* in May 1890, and six months later, he, too, finally vacated the League – not without taking with him, though, the 120-strong Hammersmith Branch, which soon after became the Hammersmith Socialist Society.¹⁰⁵²

Prior to the formation of the Independent Labour Party in 1893, the SDF was the only other Socialist organisation of size open to those now jumping ship, and Hyndman wrote to Morris accordingly, inviting him to contribute once more to *Justice*.¹⁰⁵³ Bax’s article embodied a similar ploy. In recycling Mill’s injunction about the importance of ‘the play of individual initiative’, he was extending an olive branch to the ‘many good-hearted but weak-headed Socialists’ who had been ‘deceived’ by the ‘element of truth’ that Anarchism and Socialism shared in common, namely, that ‘the freedom of the individual, the non-coercion of the individual,’ was indeed ‘an end to be striven for.’¹⁰⁵⁴

Fully aware of, but impatient with, the differences dividing those who called themselves Anarchists, Bax resorted again to caricature, as he had done seven years before, by arguing that, as with the so-called Anarchist ‘view’ on violence, ‘the Anarchist’ travestied ‘the truth’ in individualism ‘by converting it into the holy dogma of the abstract freedom of the individual at all times and in all cases.’¹⁰⁵⁵ Like the Liberal, in

¹⁰⁵⁰ Thompson, *William Morris*, p. 567.

¹⁰⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 585-597.

¹⁰⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 559-579.

¹⁰⁵³ Hyndman, *Record*, p. 331.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Bax, ‘Individual Rights under Socialism’, p. 144.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 144, 145. On the question of violence, Bax asserted that, ‘The first element of truth in Anarchism is that force is as justifiable in the hands of

adopting that intransigent posture, ‘the aforesaid Anarchist’ championed only the ‘formal appearance of freedom’.¹⁰⁵⁶ The Socialist, on the other hand, Bax contended, demanded ‘the greatest possible liberty (or license if you will) of the individual, limited only by the condition of its not infringing on the principle of equality of liberty.’¹⁰⁵⁷

‘We need scarcely say’, Bax reiterated, ‘that the notion that the maximum of Socialism corresponds to the minimum of individual liberty is as preposterous a travesty of any great principle as ever entered the perversest head of man.’¹⁰⁵⁸ The ‘tendency of Socialism’ was, rather, he insisted, ‘toward the minimisation of coercion in every department, especially of direct coercion.’¹⁰⁵⁹ Taking as an example the well-rehearsed concern ‘about the difficulty in a non-competitive society of dealing with the idle, dissolute &c.,’ the ‘problem correctly stated’, he averred, was ‘what not do with them. i.e. how best to cut them off pro hac vice from the advantages and even necessities of the social life against which they are sinning while leaving their formal freedom as individuals unimpaired.’¹⁰⁶⁰ Those individuals would, in short, be allowed, Bax asserted, ‘to retain their individual autonomy’, however much society refused to cooperate with them in practical ways.¹⁰⁶¹

Indeed, much of the illicit behaviour which was currently subject to the ‘positive coercion’ of the State would pass to the coercion of ‘public

revolution as of reaction, and that there is no inherent reason why it should not be successfully resorted to’; however, playing fast and loose with the subject of his criticism, Bax continued, ‘This Anarchism travesties in its cultus of violence as the sole justifiable method of working for revolutionary ends.’ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

opinion'.¹⁰⁶² 'Even though the private conduct of individuals might have an *indirect* bearing on the commonweal,' Bax stated again, echoing Mill once more, 'this would not justify *direct* interference'.¹⁰⁶³ On the contrary, 'any temporary inconvenience', he wrote, 'would be better than the infraction of the principle of the inviolability of the individual from coercive restraint within his own sphere'.¹⁰⁶⁴ Curiously perhaps for someone so willing to act in the meantime in the nominal best interest of others, for Bax, this 'principle of limitation' was sacrosanct.¹⁰⁶⁵ It also gestured at a more realistic appraisal of the human capacity for conflict than his utterances on the notion of an unalienated, inherently 'social' man suggest.

In replying to Hyndman's letter, Morris declined the invitation to contribute again to *Justice*: 'I want to pull myself together after what has been, to me at least, a defeat', he wrote; 'and I have got a lot of literary work on hand including two works more or less propagandist; to wit my *News from Nowhere* and the book that I have been working at with Bax which I am last going to tackle'.¹⁰⁶⁶ The book that Morris mentioned was *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*. It was composed of articles that first appeared in *Commonweal* between 1886 and 1888, and published as a book in 1893.¹⁰⁶⁷

Not surprisingly, given the libertarian bent in Morris, it too contained clear traces of Mill.¹⁰⁶⁸ For example, Bax and Morris complied

¹⁰⁶² Ibid., p. 149.

¹⁰⁶³ Bax, 'The Will of the Majority', p. 125.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Reproduced in Hyndman, *Record*, p. 331.

¹⁰⁶⁷ For a discussion of Morris's apparent 'state-ward' shift see Anna Vaninskaya, 'William Morris: The Myth of the Fall', *Journal of William Morris Studies*, 18/4 (2010), pp. 48-57.

¹⁰⁶⁸ For some potential sources of Morris's libertarianism see James W. Hulse, *Revolutionists in London. A Study of Five Unorthodox Socialists* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970), Ch. 4. Kinna, however, provides a more reliable analysis in

there with the principle ‘to secure as much of the advantages of centralised power and intelligence, as can be had without turning into governmental channels too great a proportion of the general activity’ that Mill laid down in *On Liberty*, namely ‘the greatest dissemination of power consistent with efficiency; but the greatest possible centralisation of information, and diffusion of it from the centre.’¹⁰⁶⁹ In a chapter entitled ‘Socialism Triumphant’, Bax and Morris envisaged a twofold basis by which ‘the administration of things’ would be accomplished ‘during the transitional period’.¹⁰⁷⁰ Firstly, they conceived of ‘the township as the lowest unit’ of administration, while, industrially, the ‘trade or occupation’ would be organised, similarly, along ‘the lines of a craft-guild’.¹⁰⁷¹ ‘On the other hand’, they wrote,

the highest unit would be the great council of the socialised world, and between these would be federations of localities arranged for convenience of administration. The great federal organising power, whatever form it took, would have the function of the administration of production in its higher sense. It would have to see to, for instance, the collection and distribution of all information as to the wants of populations and the possibilities of supplying them, leaving all details to the subordinate bodies, local and industrial.¹⁰⁷²

Although Bax and Morris insisted that the work had been ‘in the true sense of the word a *collaboration*,’ at least one discrepancy between the book and Bax’s own independent writing is discernible.¹⁰⁷³ Morris, unlike Bax, romanticised the so-called Teutonic village community. He regarded it as a model for Socialist administration.¹⁰⁷⁴ But Bax was far more circumspect than his collaborator about the feasibility – or the *desirability*

‘William Morris and Anti-Parliamentarism’. And Fiona McCarthy’s observations are, likewise, typically sound in *William Morris. A Life for Our Time* (London, Faber and Faber, 1994).

¹⁰⁶⁹ Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 113.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Morris and Bax, *Socialism*, p. 290.

¹⁰⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

¹⁰⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Morris outlines his vision in Chapters 11-14 of *News from Nowhere*. Vaninskaya, *Morris and the Idea of Community*, pp. 85-88.

even – of direct democracy. Whether or not Bax actually accepted the argument at the time, or simply sued for peace is another question, but he soon backtracked from the joint endorsement of direct democracy and the principle of delegation that they posited together in *Socialism* in 1893.¹⁰⁷⁵

Following Engels's analysis, Bax accepted the notion that the State, as an organ of class rule, would eventually 'wither away'.¹⁰⁷⁶ In the absence of an exploited class to forcibly suppress, it would succumb in due course to the 'administration of things'.¹⁰⁷⁷ But in the meantime Bax gave considerable attention to the question of what kind of democracy was best suited to a transitional Socialist regime. The problem of 'who' ruled was obviously crucial. But the oft-neglected companion-problem 'how' it should be done was also important to Bax.¹⁰⁷⁸ He did not think, assuredly, that the Paris Commune held the solution; a position on which Bax clearly differed again with Engels, who regarded the Commune as a template for the 'Dictatorship of the Proletariat'.¹⁰⁷⁹

In an essay entitled 'The Morrow of the Revolution' Bax wrote that, 'Socialists are often asked the question, what would you do if you found yourselves with power in your hands tomorrow?'¹⁰⁸⁰ The question was 'not an unreasonable one', he continued, conceding, in so saying, the merit of

¹⁰⁷⁵ Bax and Morris, *Socialism*, p. 292. The latter principle, it is worth pointing out here, was 'a major feature of the SDF's vision of the future system of government'. Bax, as we shall see, was certainly not in any way wedded to it, but he was probably responsible for its incorporation in the book he wrote with Morris. See Barrow and Bullock, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁷⁶ This was the term used by Engels, and later adopted by Lenin, to describe the process of transition. 'The state is not 'abolished', Engels wrote, 'it *withers away*'. *Socialism*, p. 107.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Bax and Morris, *Socialism*, p. 290.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Bobbio, *Which Socialism?*, p. 61.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Frederick Engels, 'Introduction', in Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France* (Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1966), p. 18.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Ernest Belfort Bax, 'The Morrow of the Revolution', in *Ethics of Socialism*, p. 84.

Bradlaugh's incredulous question, 'Dare you try to organise society without discussing details?'¹⁰⁸¹ According to Bax, it was a question 'that Socialists should discuss before the day finds them unprepared.'¹⁰⁸² The obstetric metaphor could only take 'scientific' Socialists so far.

Bax observed that in 'Paris eighteen years ago the problem had to be faced in a practical manner'.¹⁰⁸³ And while it was true that the leaders of Paris 'performed the ordinary executive functions of an administration admirably', confuting 'those who affect to laugh at the notion of men unacquainted with official red-tape being put into responsible positions', the experiment was not, overall, a success.¹⁰⁸⁴ The problem of Socialist transition had not, in short, been resolved by this episode in history. Rather, 'the leaders of Paris were in utter confusion as to its solution.'¹⁰⁸⁵ In that essay, Bax confined his own proposals to two distinct spheres: to 'the *purely economic* action' of an organised Socialist administration on the one hand, and to its 'legislative and juridical' supplement on the other.¹⁰⁸⁶ The question of democracy he tackled elsewhere.

The 'usual reply', Bax opined, 'to the question referred to in opening', namely 'that we intend to nationalise or communise the means of production and distribution', was unduly evasive.¹⁰⁸⁷ While 'strictly and literally correct', it performed very little, real expository work.¹⁰⁸⁸ All well and good to explain further that 'we mean to take over the big industries, railways, factories, banks... and to proceed by the erection of communal or municipal workshops and stores on a large scale to undermine by

¹⁰⁸¹ Ibid. *Will Socialism Benefit the English People?*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁸² Bax, 'The Morrow of the Revolution', p. 84.

¹⁰⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Ibid.

competition the individualist-capitalist production and distribution', but 'immediate steps of an *ad interim* character' would also have to be taken.¹⁰⁸⁹

Descending scarcely to the level of detail expected by Bradlaugh, Bax proposed three courses of action: the implementation, firstly, of an eight-hour working-day or less; the enactment, secondly, of a law of a *maximum* and *minimum*; and the abrogation, thirdly, 'of "civil" law, especially that largest department of it which is concerned with the enforcement of contract and the recovery of debt.'¹⁰⁹⁰ For the rest, 'until the economic change has worked itself out in ethical change,' he added, 'it is clear that a criminal law must exist.'¹⁰⁹¹ Bax, therefore, recommended the suspension of existing criminal law and its replacement with 'the Code Napoleon' in countries where it did not obtain. A 'committee of urgency' would also be appointed to bring it into accordance 'with the new Socialist conceptions.'¹⁰⁹²

In 1976, Norberto Bobbio complained of how it had become 'almost *de rigueur* for a Marxist concerned with political theory to hark back to the Commune and cite it as a source of inspiration and insight'. But when Bax offered his less than commendatory musings on the subject in 1889, that aspect of the nascent intellectual tradition had not yet been set.¹⁰⁹³ Unlike most later thinkers associated with the same tradition, Bax did not believe that the relationship between democracy and Socialism was, so to speak,

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 85, 86.

¹⁰⁹¹ Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁰⁹² Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁰⁹³ Bobbio, *Which Socialism?*, p. 32.

automatic. Nor did he fetishize its direct variety. Rather, Bax recognised that, as Bobbio sparingly put it, ‘democracy is difficult’.¹⁰⁹⁴

To be sure, Bax embraced the notion that a time would come ‘when the social organism in all its parts’ would ‘work automatically’.¹⁰⁹⁵ ‘But until that time does come,’ he confessed, ‘authority in direction will in many departments be necessary.’¹⁰⁹⁶ First of all, Bax argued that ‘the initiative or referendum of a democracy cannot be taken on details of executive administration’.¹⁰⁹⁷ In fact, that principle was no less true, he went on, of ‘any matter requiring immediate decision, or on a question of tactics, or (with good results) on questions involving special knowledge, in short, on anything other than general issues.’¹⁰⁹⁸ True democracy, he argued, ‘while it means all *for* the people, does not mean the impossible absurdity that everything should be directly regulated *by* the people, i.e., by a direct popular vote.’¹⁰⁹⁹

Bax restated the notion that ‘the will of the majority in itself is by no means absolutely so worthy of all acceptance as some assume.’¹¹⁰⁰ In a *genuinely* ‘free society of equals’, he wrote, ‘the will of the majority must be the ultimate court of appeal, not because it is an ideally perfect one, but because’ simply it is ‘the best available’.¹¹⁰¹ Showing no sign of devaluing the role of intellectual elites, Bax found it hard to conceive of a time when opinion would ever attain a state of real equality, one opinion counting for as much as another. It must, at any rate, be admitted, he insisted, that ‘in

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 68. See also Ibid., pp. 74, 79.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘The Word of Command’, in *Essays in Socialism*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Ibid. Collini, ‘Political Theory and the ‘Science of Society’ in Victorian Britain’, p. 204.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Bax, ‘The Word of Command’, p. 75.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 76.

¹¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 75.

¹¹⁰¹ Bax, ‘The Will of the Majority’, p. 127.

affairs of management, of tactics, of administration, or in decisions requiring special knowledge, authority' would be necessary for some time before the order of routine eventually prevailed.¹¹⁰² For example, 'In the case of a revolutionary army, military or political, on board ship, or in the factory, the workshop, etc., there must be a controlling, an authoritative voice in direction'.¹¹⁰³ That much, at least, was clear 'to all practical or reasonable persons'.¹¹⁰⁴ 'The real point to determine', then, according to Bax, was only 'the nature and limits of that amount of dictatorial power'.¹¹⁰⁵

Bax described 'a Scylla and Charybdis to be avoided'.¹¹⁰⁶ 'The first', he explained, 'is the idolisation of the mere control of numbers – the tendency to regard the mere forms of democracy as of equal or even greater importance than the democratic end in view'.¹¹⁰⁷ While the second, meanwhile, lay 'in allowing dictatorial powers, without appeal, to be in the hands of any *one* man'.¹¹⁰⁸ An 'unqualified and unconditional repudiation' of the latter by no means had to involve 'throwing oneself into the arms' of the former, he counselled.¹¹⁰⁹ Rather, a third possibility of steering a course between them was also obviously available. A 'Socialist society in its earliest stages' shared the organisational needs of a political party.¹¹¹⁰ What was wanted in leadership for the latter was 'the direction of a small scale committee of, say, three competent and trusted delegates, to render an account of their stewardship, and be re-elected (or rejected) after serving for a term'.¹¹¹¹ Notwithstanding the actual details, which he withheld, the

¹¹⁰² Bax, 'The Word of Command', pp. 75-76.

¹¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 76.

¹¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 78.

¹¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 77.

¹¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 78.

¹¹¹¹ Ibid.

same held true in ‘all matters of administration, direction, and organisation, political, social, industrial,’ Bax asserted, for ‘the Social-Democratic society of the future’ in its infancy.¹¹¹²

Bax did not disavow, then, representative democracy as a form of good government. However much of a sham its extant application appeared to him, it was both preferable to, and more practical than, the principle of ‘the count-of-heads majority of a popular assembly or unwieldy committee.’¹¹¹³ The ‘right of recall at any time’ that Engels set so much store by in his introduction to *The Civil War in France* was put to one side in favour of the above-mentioned small elected committees, free to serve for a term unhindered before being re-elected or rejected once that term had elapsed.¹¹¹⁴ As shown by his faith in the European Socialist party to wield responsibly the maxim ‘the end justifies the means’, the potential for power to corrupt did not weigh heavily on Bax’s mind when enunciating his stripped down notion of representation, however vague his attempt was to execute that task. Bax’s advocacy of the ‘harm principle’ was, perhaps, ultimately undermined, then, by the paucity of his power of anticipation.

¹¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹¹³ Ibid., p. 77.

¹¹¹⁴ Engels, ‘Introduction’, in Marx, *Civil War in France*, p. 16.

Conclusion

In his autobiography, Havelock Ellis described Bax as ‘a daring adventurer in theoretical fields’.¹¹¹⁵ Of that there can surely be little dispute. No more controversial, one might assume, was the claim of Bernstein that Bax was ‘one of those English intellectuals who, early in the eighties, first restored to Socialism... its civil rights in the world of letters’.¹¹¹⁶ In the light of the foregoing pages, both remarks seem beyond doubt. Yet, as has been shown in this thesis, Bax has rarely been granted the attention that that contribution to the history of British Socialism plainly merits. Still now, Morris is judged ‘the only theorist of originality and stature whose work has significant affinities with Marx’.¹¹¹⁷ Concomitantly, Bax is dismissed, fifty years on from the work of the Marxist historians broached at the outset, for his ‘overly academic manner and often idiosyncratic views’.¹¹¹⁸

Not surprisingly, Hyndman’s standing has not much improved in the meantime, either. In his account of Marx’s relationship to British Socialism in the nineteenth century, David Leopold made similarly short shrift of him too. There, many of the old stock-misconceptions – Hyndman’s ‘conservatism’, ‘enthusiasm for empire’ etc – are uncritically recycled once more.¹¹¹⁹ Certainly, Bax’s opinion that in ‘Hyndman we have one of the most remarkable figures of the twentieth century’ has not yet been echoed in the historical profession.¹¹²⁰ Nor, however, has Bax’s more

¹¹¹⁵ Havelock Ellis, *My Life* (London and Toronto, William Heinemann Ltd, 1939), p. 156.

¹¹¹⁶ Bernstein, *My Life in Exile*, p. 200.

¹¹¹⁷ David Leopold, ‘Karl Marx and British Socialism’, in W. J. Mandler (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 416.

¹¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 415.

¹¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 415-416.

¹¹²⁰ Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘The Evolution of Revolution’, *Justice* (3 Feb. 1921), p. 3.

convincing utterance: that he found ‘it difficult to envisage the... Socialist movement’ without him.¹¹²¹ But, as we have seen, Hyndman *was* a pivotal figure, both far more complex intellectually than historians have given him credit for and a crucial force in getting the Socialist movement off the ground in Britain during the 1880s.

In short, if ever a new referent were needed for Thompson’s phrase, ‘the enormous condescension of posterity’, together, Hyndman and Bax provide it.¹¹²² To upend that phrase and turn it against its author is of course something of a paradox. But the historical assumptions of Thompson and his peers have engendered the need for a rescue mission comparable to that which Thompson sought to accomplish for ‘the poor stockinger’, ‘the Luddite cropper’ and so forth¹¹²³. As was shown in the introduction, the fact that most of the pioneering studies trenching on the ground compassed in this thesis emanated from historians who also inhabited the intellectual tradition that Bax and Hyndman cleaved to has meant, in practice, that properly dispassionate appraisals of their interaction with Marx’s work and their respective contributions to the remaking of British Socialism have been few and far between.

It is certainly true to say that Bevir has done something to counteract that historiographical defect. His portrait of Bax is, on the whole, a step forward. But Bevir advances as history what is in fact, properly speaking, a series of rationally reconstructed intellectual profiles. And as we have also seen in the introduction, his use of aggregate concepts has often done far more to

¹¹²¹ Ibid.

¹¹²² E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, Penguin, 2013), p. 12.

¹¹²³ Ibid.

shroud and confuse our understanding of the past than to elucidate it – his use of the term ‘Marxist’ providing a case in point. What is more, Bevir’s reconstruction of Hyndman’s ideas strikes a singularly discordant note with the analysis presented here, serving to buttress, rather than challenge, the politically-charged assessments inherited from Thompson and others. Thus, if Bevir moved the historiography forward with Bax, with Hyndman he set it into reverse.

However, what Bevir missed, above all, in *The Making of British Socialism* was the centrality of Mill to the story he was attempting to tell. In the section entitled ‘The Marxists’ Mill is not mentioned once. Yet, as we have seen in Chapters 2, 3, and 11, the influence that Mill exercised on the two figures most responsible for propagating a species of Marx’s ideas was far-reaching. Whether that was Mill’s *Chapters on Socialism* that loomed so large in Hyndman’s imagination in 1881, his *Representative Government* that gave substance to Hyndman’s view of the British empire and of political reform, or the use that Bax made in turn of the same text and *On Liberty*, Bevir’s omission is a glaring error. Moreover, other errors abound in Bevir’s text.

For example, the imprecision of the claim that ‘British socialism emerged largely in response to... the collapse of classical economics and the crisis of faith’ is also a serious flaw.¹¹²⁴ It elides, firstly, all that is specific about the process of Socialism’s remaking – in particular, the formative discussion of the topic which took place in the periodical press between 1878 and 1880, discussed in Chapter 2. While, secondly, it does little justice to the more general reasons as to why Socialism emerged when it did – the conduciveness of the ‘culture of altruism’ that intellectuals like Bax

¹¹²⁴ Bevir, *Making of British Socialism*, p. 16.

inhabited, the unravelling of co-operation as a viable going concern, experiments in municipalisation and other recent instances of State intervention, the onset of democracy, and the emergence of monopolies and global economic competition.

The failure, meanwhile, to acknowledge Mill and the debate in the periodical press, combined with Bevir's general inattention to detail, has meant that other crucial sources of influence have likewise gone undetected. In Hyndman's case, Mazzini, Fawcett, Morley, and Toynbee all go unobserved. For Bax, Spencer is the most significant figure that Bevir failed to notice. This thesis, by contrast, has sought to shed as much light as possible on those sometimes less than obvious connections. It has also sought to restore the numerous dialogues in which the writings of Bax and Hyndman were enmeshed. That has meant going far beyond their interaction with the work of Marx and Engels. But here, too, as we have seen, their texts – most obviously, those of Bax and Engels – were also in conversation.

What has emerged from the research set out in this thesis is that, put in the simplest of terms, Hyndman, firstly, was not the Tory Radical of historical repute, and Bax, secondly, was one of the most serious internal critics of 'Marxism' of his generation, who did battle with Engels in print. Both findings will be news to other historians. But it is only in the light of them that the dispositions for which Hyndman has been routinely condemned become explicable: Hyndman's gradualism, the top-down nature of his Socialism, and his mistrust of Trade Unions, for example; all were vestiges of the waning influence of Mill, Morley, and Fawcett, Liberals to a piece. At the same time, once it is recognised just how prominently Bax appeared in

Engels's political imagination it becomes much harder to continue to turn a deaf ear to his 'idiosyncratic views'.

In many respects, in his criticism of Marx and Engels, Bax was in fact well ahead of the curve. The same, indeed, could even be said of Hyndman until roughly 1882.¹¹²⁵ Moreover, the distinctiveness of their respective convictions owed a disproportionate debt to native sources, above all, to Mill, the Idealists, and the indigenous Comtists. With the exception of the Idealists, it was these sources, similarly, which initially set Socialism going. By the middle of the 1880s the Comtists may have been a spent force. But in the preceding decade their stance on the Paris Commune and their rejection of Malthus and political economy made the Positivist body an obvious conduit for Bax.¹¹²⁶ The role of Mill's *Chapters*, on the other hand, needs no further comment.

Without doubt, the encounters with German sources of those intellectuals involved in the remaking of Socialism who had spent time in Germany were also important. The leading *Kathedersozialisten* were not only familiar to Pearson. More significantly, they were familiar to Cunningham too. Bax, likewise, showed no inhibition in 1879 in invoking Dühring and Lange. For the latter, at least, Marx, properly speaking, came later, and later still, came Engels's interpretation of Marx. The same ordering holds true of Hyndman's relationship to Marx's work. The two main subjects of this thesis may have taken different exits at the fork in the road after Marx's death, with Hyndman following Engels in notably uncomplicated fashion. But prior to 1883 they both saw Marx, first and foremost, as a political economist.

¹¹²⁵ See, for example, Cohen's re-evaluation of the importance of social ethos. *If You're an Egalitarian*, p. 3.

¹¹²⁶ Harrison, *Before the Socialists*, p. 331.

Only later, as we have seen, did Engels succeed in imposing his interpretation of Marx on the protagonists of 'scientific Socialism' in Britain. That very term, along with the twin-concepts 'historical materialism' and the 'materialist dialectic', not to mention the Marx-Darwin analogy and the mythic joint-identity, were accretions. They first made an appearance in Hyndman's book, *The Historical Basis*. Thereafter, it was the 'second fiddle', and no longer the first, that counted. Thus, out went appeals to justice and reform of the representative state and in came ethical relativism and 'the administration of things'. Bax, of course, had never made recourse to an abstract notion of justice. Nor had he seriously envisaged anything other than a revolutionary overturn of the bourgeois State. He did, however, issue a critique of 'Marxism', which continued to resound across the twentieth century.

As we have seen in Chapters 4, 10, and 11, when it came to his appreciation of power Bax did not show himself in the best light. He failed to attend to the warnings that a ruling class could also exist under Socialism.¹¹²⁷ He was not on particularly firm ground either in his analysis of competition. In contrast to Engels, Bax showed no inclination to credit the price mechanism as an efficacious instrument of economic co-ordination.¹¹²⁸ Planning, rather, was simply presumed unproblematic. On these matters, Mill was unquestionably the most perspicacious advocate of Socialism during the period of its remaking. But, on other questions, Bax was less short-sighted. He was canny enough, for example, to isolate some of the most obvious shortcomings of 'Marxism' that other critics internal to that tradition

¹¹²⁷ For an interesting analysis of this issue see Alan Ryan, *Property and Political Theory* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1984), pp. 187-189.

¹¹²⁸ Engels, 'Preface to the First German Edition', in Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*, p. 21.

returned to repeatedly down to the point of its disintegration as a serious intellectual force in the 1980s.¹¹²⁹

Spurred on by the upturn of interest in Kant during the early 1880s, Bax, first of all, poured scorn on the idealist-materialist dichotomy. For him, as was demonstrated in Chapter 9, it was a false and dangerous division that effectively sanctioned passivity. To circumvent the ‘crude and dogmatic materialism’ of Marx and Engels, Bax constructed the theory of contingency also laid out in Chapter 9.¹¹³⁰ Starting from the philosophical premise that Reality comprised a synthesis of Feeling and Thought, he emphasised the role of the individual and human activity in history. Finally, Bax rejected Engels’s ‘unanimist depiction of democracy’ too.¹¹³¹ To endorse the kind of direct democracy enacted during the Commune was, he held, a mistake. At a time when few other Socialists gave it a second thought, Bax also insisted on the retention of individual rights under Socialism.

There is no shortage of thinkers with whom Bax could be paired on these issues. But what is undoubtedly most interesting here is the extent to which his New Left detractors also adopted these views. First of all, Thompson famously argued that the individual is ‘partly an agent in history’; ‘men’, he wrote, ‘do not only “reflect” experience passively; they also think about that experience; and their thinking affects the way they act.’¹¹³² Thompson also endorsed the rule of law as ‘an unqualified human

¹¹²⁹ See Goran Therborn, ‘After Dialectics: Radical Social Theory in a Post-Communist World’, *New Left Review*, 43 (2007), pp. 63–114.

¹¹³⁰ One hundred years later Gregor McLennan was still grappling with the problems that Bax set out to answer. ‘Post-Marxism and the ‘Four Sins’ of Modernist Theorizing’, *New Left Review*, 1/218 (1996), pp. 53–74.

¹¹³¹ This phrase is borrowed from Charles Taylor’s essay, ‘Marxism and Socialist Humanism’, in Robin Archer, Diemut Bubeck, Hanjo Glock, Lesley Jacobs, Seth Moglen, Adam Steinhouse, and Daniel Weinstock (eds.), *Out of Apathy. Voices of the New Left Thirty Years On* (London, Verso, 1989), p. 65.

¹¹³² E. P. Thompson, ‘Socialist Humanism. An Epistle to the Philistines’, *The New Reasoner*, 1 (1957), p. 133.

good'.¹¹³³ Other members of the New Left, meanwhile, subjected the concept of 'historical materialism' to even closer scrutiny. Stedman Jones, for instance, explored the poverty of the philosophical materialism promoted by Engels via the work of Georg Lukács; and Anderson, likewise, drew extensively on the same Western Marxist tradition.¹¹³⁴ However, none of these authors upgraded Bax in their estimation as a result. Morris, rather, continued to elicit the sympathy of the New Left, in both its First and Second incarnations.

But for the pronounced political bias of the Communist Party Historians Group and its First New Left progeny in the 1950s, and the decidedly abstract, universalist frame of the generation of conceptually ambitious historians who inherited the New Left mantle in the 1960s, Bax and Hyndman would no doubt have had a much fairer showing in the historiography of British Socialism. In the event, omission in the first case and parody in the second reigned. The parallels that existed between them have been documented here because they belong essentially to the same continuous history. Respectively, they mark the beginning and the end of the intellectual tradition invented by Engels during the 1880s. In the same degree as it is no longer possible to take the existence of 'Marxism' for granted at the outset of the 1880s, it is no longer desirable to continue to take cues from historians also in the Marxist tradition. This thesis has sought to storm the last bastions of Engelsian prejudice.

¹¹³³ E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters. The Origin of the Black Act* (Bristol, Allen Lane, 1975), p. 266.

¹¹³⁴ Gareth Stedman Jones, 'The Marxism of the Early Lukács: an Evaluation', *New Left Review*, 1/170 (1971), pp. 27-64. Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London, New Left Books, 1976).

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